

THE BOY FROM  
GREEN GINGER  
• LAND •

E. Vaughan Smith



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Maxwell Kerr.  
Iras. 1938.





THE  
BOY FROM GREEN GINGER LAND





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QUITE A LITTLE CROWD GATHERED TO WATCH MICKY.



# THE BOY FROM GREEN GINGER LAND

BY

E. VAUGHAN-SMITH

AUTHOR OF 'CRAGS OF DUTY,' ETC.

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

'QUITE A LITTLE CROWD GATHERED TO WATCH  
MICKY.'

'KITTY GAVE SUCH A BOUND OF DELIGHT THAT SHE  
NEARLY UPSET HER TEA.'

'IT WAS LOCKED AND BOLTED, TOP AND BOTTOM.'

'“OH, WHAT *shall* WE DO?” SHE SOBBED.'



# THE BOY FROM GREEN GINGER LAND

## CHAPTER I

### THREE CHILDREN AND A DOG

‘EMMELINE, it’s your turn to choose a game to-day. What story shall we do?’

‘No, Micky; it’s your turn,’ put in his twin sister Kitty. ‘Emmeline chose the day before yesterday.’

‘I know it’s my turn really, Kitty, but gentlemen always let ladies choose,’ said eight-year-old Micky with dignity. ‘I’d very much *advise* “Swiss Family Robinson,” because it seems such a splendid opportunity, now the curtain-rods are down, to use the short ones as sugar-canes; and Mary’s so sorry we’re going away to-morrow that she won’t be cross even if the paint does get a little kicked off the bath when it’s being wrecked.’

‘Micky, I think it’s horrid of you to talk of Mary’s being sorry like that,’ said Emmeline—

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'just as if you didn't care a bit about our having to leave the home of a lifetime, and the only real friend who has been with us since we were babies, to go and live with an aunt who doesn't care for us!'

'How do you know Aunt Grace doesn't care for us? She's always very jolly when she comes here, and she never forgets birthdays,' said Micky, who had a sense of justice. 'She sends such sensible things, too—postal orders, or steam-engines that really work, or real good books of adventure. *She* never gives you poetry-books.' This last was a sore point with Micky just then, for his godmother had recently presented him with a gilt-edged volume of 'The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth,' for which he had been expected to write a laborious round-hand letter of thanks.

'Presents are all very well, but they don't prove that a person loves you,' said Emmeline; 'and as to her being jolly when she comes here, she never stays more than a day or two at a time, and always seems in a great hurry to get back to London again. Do you think, if she had really cared anything about us, she would have left us a whole year after darling mother died before offering to come and look after us?'

This was rather out of Micky's depth, so he prudently changed the subject. 'Well, let's get

started with the game,' he said, 'else we shall have to get tidy for tea before we've even been properly wrecked.'

But Emmeline was not to be put off so easily. 'Micky,' she demanded solemnly, 'how can you be so taken up with story-games when we're as good as *living* a story ourselves?'

The twins' eyes sparkled. Anything savouring of romance was as the breath of life to them, and Emmeline was really rather impressive when she talked in that grave way.

'How do you mean?' asked Kitty, eagerly.

'Why, what I have just been saying,' replied Emmeline. 'Here are we, three orphans, left to the care of a worldly aunt——'

'But are you quite sure she's worldly?' asked Kitty, looking alarmed. Kitty was not altogether clear what 'worldly' meant, but from the way Emmeline pronounced the word it sounded like something very bad.

'I'm afraid so,' said Emmeline. 'I remember once, when mother and I spent a night with her in London, and she and her friend kept talking about a ball they had just been to.'

'But balls aren't wrong, are they?' asked Kitty. Emmeline was twelve, and Kitty regarded as a great authority on all questions of morals.

'I don't know that they're exactly wrong,' ac-

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knowledgeed Emmeline, 'but they are great waste of time. When I'm grown up I never mean to go to them, but shall spend all my time working for the poor. Besides, it isn't only her going to balls that makes me think Aunt Grace worldly, but the way she dresses and—everything. I quite expect that when we know more of her we shall find her just like one of the fine ladies one reads of in books.'

'Will she be cruel to us, do you suppose?' asked Kitty with zest. She did not really believe that merry, good-natured Aunt Grace could be cruel, any more than she really, at the bottom of her heart, believed in a romance of Micky's about a certain blood-thirsty burglar who lived in the spare-room wardrobe, but it made life more exciting to pretend to herself that she did.

'Of course not. What a silly question, Kitty!' exclaimed Emmeline impatiently. 'I dare say she will be too busy with parties and so on to bother herself much about us, but she'll be quite kind—at least, to us. Punch is the only one I feel at all doubtful about.' She flung herself down on to the hearthrug, and rested her head against that of a fox-terrier who was lying there half asleep, and who gave a little growl of remonstrance at being disturbed. 'We hadn't got him when she was here last, you



see, so we can't tell what she'll think of him. I shouldn't a bit wonder if she didn't let us bring him to Woodsleigh, or even if she does, she'll keep him chained up all day, poor darling! People who think much about clothes never do like dogs, except just silly little toy things.'

Micky and Kitty broke out together in a chorus of indignation and horror.

'If they are so horrid as to chain Punch up in the kennel all day I shall jolly well stay out with him and keep him company!' shouted Micky.

'Oh, Emmeline, you don't really think there's any danger of Aunt Grace not letting darling Punch come?' said Kitty, almost in tears.

'Well, I hope not,' said Emmeline; 'anyhow I've written to her about it, so till we've had time to get her answer there's no use worrying any more.' There was not, but the very suggestion that Punch might have to be left behind had cast a gloom upon the party—a gloom which did not altogether lift even when the brilliant idea struck Micky that the brooms in the housemaid's cupboard, if placed upside down and balanced against the wall, would make excellent palm-trees for the Robinsons' desert island.

On the whole, Emmeline was the happiest of the three just then, for, grieved as she was at leaving Mary and possibly Punch, the prospect

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of going to live with her aunt was not altogether without its secret charm for her. The good little girl who had such a beautiful influence on her worldly relations played a prominent part in several of her favourite books, and it was that part which Emmeline pictured herself playing with regard to Aunt Grace. She would have been ashamed to express this idea in so many words even to herself, far more to the twins, but it none the less reconciled her a good deal to the new life which lay before them.

Emmeline Bolton had always been a child of the type whose virtue specially appeals to nurses. All the grown-up people, indeed, who had ever been brought much into contact with her agreed in considering her a very good girl. In some respects she deserved their favourable opinion, for she was truthful, obedient, and conscientious by nature, but perhaps the fact that she had never been very strong had more to do with her reputation for goodness than she herself or anyone else quite realised.

The child lived in an atmosphere of warm and constant approval which was not altogether wholesome. Such had been the state of affairs two years ago, when all three children had fallen ill of measles. Micky and Kitty had had the disease lightly, but with Emmeline it took a serious form. For two days and nights she had

lain delirious, and there came a moment when Mary, believing her to be unconscious, had sobbed out to the trained nurse: 'I always had a feeling that the dear child was too sweet and good to be long for this world!'

This presentiment proved a groundless one. As Emmeline grew better the words which she had heard in her half-delirious state came back to her, and she dwelt on them constantly. Just at first they frightened her a little, but when she had become quite strong and well again she ceased to be alarmed, and only felt pleasantly elated at being too good to be long for this world. It almost—though not quite—made up for having straight brown hair and a pale peaked face instead of golden curls and glowing cheeks like the twins, who were so pretty that people in the street sometimes turned round to look after them.

If Emmeline's mother had lived she would probably have perceived that the child was in grave danger of growing into a little Pharisee, and she might have done something to check it, but she had become very ill almost as soon as the children had recovered from the measles, and had died less than a year later. After her death the children had gone on living at the old home at Eastwich, a great East Anglian town, under the joint charge of Mary and Miss Rogers, their daily governess. The arrangement was never intended

to be more than a temporary one, for their aunt, Miss Bolton, who was also their guardian, wished them to go and live with her at Woodsleigh, a place some twelve miles distant from Eastwich, as soon as she regained possession of a cottage there, which had been left her by her father, but let for several years past. Mary was to go to her own home to keep house for a brother, so that to-morrow, when her children, as she always called them, went to begin their new life with Aunt Grace, she would have to be left behind at Eastwich.

'Come, my darlings,' said Mary, landing so abruptly on the Swiss Family Robinson's desert island that most of the palm-trees were knocked over, 'tea's quite ready, and there's buttered toast and coffee.'

Buttered toast and coffee were always regarded as special treats, but somehow to-day nobody seemed to have quite as much appetite for them as usual. Mary and Micky kept making jokes, and they all tried to be very merry, but not even the presence of Punch, who was allowed to sit on a chair between the twins in special honour of the occasion, made the festivity much of a success. They could none of them forget it was the last tea with Mary in the old home.

Emmeline stayed up that evening until some time after the twins had gone to bed, and sat



on the floor leaning her head against Mary's knee.

'Well, my darling,' said Mary after a while, 'I hope you'll all be very happy and good with your Aunt Grace. Of course some of her ways may be a bit different from what you're used to, but there, I'm sure she's as well-meaning a young lady as ever breathed, and we know that everything must work out for the best, or it wouldn't be let happen. Well, I know you'll always be a good child, dear Miss Emmeline, and help Master Micky and Miss Kitty, bless their dear little hearts!'

Poor Mary! She would have been horrified if she could have guessed that any words or tone of hers could have led Emmeline to set Aunt Grace down as worldly, for Mary was a thoroughly good woman, but all unconsciously a little accent of doubtfulness showed itself in her voice and confirmed Emmeline's impression.

For several years past the little girl had undressed herself, but for this last time Mary put her to bed just as she had done in the far-off days of Emmeline's dimmest memories.

Long after Mary had kissed her good-night the child lay awake, thinking how dreary it would be at Woodsleigh to have no old nurse to tuck her up, and passionately resolving that, come what might, she at least would always keep true to the

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old ways Mary had taught her. She made the resolution purely and simply out of loyalty to Mary, and not with any view to her mission towards Aunt Grace, which for the moment she had quite forgotten.

## CHAPTER II

### FIR-TREE COTTAGE

TO-MORROW morning came all too soon. A pleasant letter from Aunt Grace arrived at breakfast-time, containing a warm invitation for Punch to take up his abode at Woodsleigh, which was a great relief and pleasure to the rest of the party, but otherwise the day was a trying one. Mary went about with a duster swathed round her head, as she always did during the spring-cleaning, and there was a general feeling of bustle and discomfort. The children wandered restlessly from room to room, trying to help, but usually only succeeded in being in the way, and secretly they rather longed for the cab which was to take them to the station in time for the 11.35 train.

The cab came at last, and less than a quarter of an hour later they found themselves installed with Punch and endless baggage in a second-class railway carriage, while Mary stood on the platform smiling bravely. Another few minutes, and the train was starting with a shriek and a pant. All three children leaned out of the window, waving

frantically, till the line curved round a corner and Mary and her fluttering handkerchief were lost to sight. After that it was Punch who saved the situation. All his journeys to the seaside had failed to accustom him to railway travelling, and he now took refuge under the seat, looking so cowed and miserable that nobody could think of anything but how to comfort and reassure him. They were so much occupied with this as to be quite taken by surprise at reaching their destination in what seemed an astonishingly short time.

The only people waiting on Woodsleigh platform were a lad who served both as porter and ticket-collector and Aunt Grace herself—an Aunt Grace who looked wonderfully young and pretty to be aunt and guardian to such a big girl as Emmeline. She was, in fact, very much what her niece Kitty might become a few years hence when transformed from a tomboy into a fashionable, grown-up young lady. She hurried forward to open the carriage door for the children, and greeted the whole party, including Punch, with such frank delight at seeing them that not even Emmeline could help being charmed, and a limpet-like twin was soon clinging to either side of her in a devoted, if rather inconvenient, fashion.

‘We shall have to leave the boxes to be brought up by the milk-cart in the course of the afternoon,’

explained Aunt Grace when the luggage had all been taken out of the train. 'We're very primitive at Woodsleigh, and the milk-cart's the only thing we can boast of in the way of a public conveyance. It won't come till later on in the afternoon, but I can lend brushes and sponges, so I hope you'll be able to manage all right till then.'

'We did wash our hands just before coming, and Mary brushed all our hairs,' Micky was careful to assure her, 'so you needn't trouble to lend us things. But thank you all the same,' he added hastily, for fear of hurting her feelings.

'Micky, you *know* Mary always makes us wash our hands and faces after railway journeys!' said Emmeline—a remark which Micky, who was just then stooping down to undo Punch's lead, found it convenient not to hear.

'I hope before long to get a donkey and donkey-cart of our own,' observed Aunt Grace as they left the station and came out into a village street; 'then we shan't have to depend on the milk-cart, and it will be much more convenient altogether.'

'Oh, Aunt Grace, how lovely!' exclaimed Kitty, giving a joyous little skip. 'Donkeys are such dears!'

'I shall ride ours bare-back,' announced Micky, 'and teach him all sorts of tricks.'

'I'm always so glad to think of a donkey having



a good home,' said Emmeline; 'people are so cruel to them sometimes. When we stayed at the seaside, it often made us quite sad to see how they were ill-treated.'

'Yes, I know,' said Aunt Grace; 'it is very sad. Two or three years ago I was staying at the seaside with some children, who made a special point of hiring the ones with unkind masters for extra long rides, and never letting them be whipped, so as to give them a rest from being ill-treated.'

'I wish I knew those nice children,' said Kitty.

'And I expect they found the donkeys really went quite as well, didn't they, Aunt Grace?' asked Emmeline, who had not yet learned that virtue often has to be its own reward.

'Well, I'm afraid I can't say they did,' owned Aunt Grace with a little twinkle in her eye; 'at the best of times they went at a slow and stately pace somewhat resembling a funeral procession, and at the worst of times they sat down comfortably in the middle of the road and refused to budge. Still, I don't doubt that if my friends had had the bringing up of those donkeys from the first, they would have gone all right without being beaten. It was simply that the poor creatures had got so used to it that they didn't understand anything else.'

'Aren't we nearly at your house?' asked Kitty

presently ; ' we seem getting quite outside the village now.'

' No, we have still about ten minute's walk before we get to Fir-tree Cottage,' replied Aunt Grace ; ' it stands right away from other houses, just outside a large wood. It's very nice in most ways being quite out of the village, for it makes one so much freer to do just as one likes, but it's rather inconvenient sometimes being so far from the station. It's really not so very much farther to Chudstone Station—the one you passed next before Woodsleigh ; indeed, when I have plenty of time, I sometimes start from there instead of from Woodsleigh, for it makes a delightful walk through the wood.'

' How jolly to live in a cottage and so near a wood !' cried Kitty, giving another little skip.

' As to living in a cottage, I'm afraid you won't find it quite your idea of one,' said Aunt Grace, ' though it really *was* one before grandfather built on the front part of the house. The wood's real enough though, and begins only just outside our back-garden gate, which is very charming of it.'

' I thought grandfather was a Professor,' remarked Micky, looking puzzled.

' Why, so he was,' said Aunt Grace.

' But if he built the front part of the house he must have been a stone-mason, like Mary's brother,' objected Micky.

'Aunt Grace didn't mean that he built it with his own hands, you silly child!' said Emmeline, laughing.

'But I don't wonder Micky thought I did,' said Aunt Grace kindly; 'it was very natural.'

Aunt Grace was right in saying that Fir-tree Cottage was not the kind of cottage to which the children were used. It was what they considered quite a large house, standing well back from the road among lawns and shrubberies, and when they walked in at the front door they found themselves, not in the poky little passage that Kitty had been picturing to herself from her remembrances of seaside lodgings, but in a hall as large as the one at their old home, and far more charming, for it was bright with ferns and flowering plants and cosy with cushioned seats and lion-skin rugs. In this hall they were met by a rather austere-looking person whom Aunt Grace called Jane.

'Jane was my nurse when I was a little girl,' she said, 'so we are very old friends, and now she is going to help look after you;' at which Jane smiled grimly, and Emmeline thought how horrid it would be to have her to look after them instead of kind, gentle Mary.

'Now, we must certainly take Punch to be introduced to Cook,' said Aunt Grace; 'she's a splendid person for animals.'

This introduction was so successful that Emmeline forgot all disagreeable impressions. Cook was found in her bright airy kitchen with its red-tiled floor and rows of shining dish-covers, and she and Punch seemed quite delighted with one another. 'That's a rare nice little dog,' she kept saying as he smelt round her skirts with marked approval. 'Have you shown them the kennel, miss?' she added. 'I give that a good scrubbing yesterday as soon as ever I heard he was coming, so that will be all nice and fresh for him now. There's clean straw in too.'

'We must go and admire it,' said Aunt Grace, and they went through the scullery and out into the back-yard, in one corner of which was an enormous dog-kennel.

'The last dog who lived here was a St. Bernard,' explained Aunt Grace, 'so Punch will find his quarters very roomy ones.'

'Aunt Grace, you aren't going to keep him chained up except when he goes for walks, are you?' asked Kitty.

'Why, of course not,' said Aunt Grace; 'this is his private bedroom, that's all, and I no more expect him to stay here all day than I shall expect *you* to stay in your bedrooms.'

This so greatly relieved the children that they were in a mood to be delighted with everything when Aunt Grace led them upstairs to show

them their own bedrooms. She took them first to the room which the two girls were to share, and they both exclaimed at the sight of its dainty white-painted furniture and fresh muslin hangings. In each half of the room was a little white bed, a white wash-hand stand, and a white chest of drawers with a looking-glass standing on the top of it.

‘It’s quite like grand grown-up ladies, both of us having a wash-stand and a dressing-table to ourselves,’ said Kitty, with much satisfaction; ‘there was only one of each in the night-nursery at home.’

‘They are such pretty ones, too,’ said Emmeline. ‘I do love white enamel.’

‘I’m very glad you like them,’ said Aunt Grace, looking pleased; ‘I always think one has so much more heart in keeping one’s room tidy if the furniture’s nice.’

‘Yes, you won’t have to leave your things about here, Kitty,’ remarked Emmeline, in her elder-sisterly way.

Kitty was not listening; she had rushed to the window. ‘I do believe—yes, you really *can* just see the sea!’ she exclaimed. ‘Oh, Aunt Grace, may we go there every day?’

‘I’m afraid it’s rather too far off to go there every day,’ said Aunt Grace; ‘it’s a good five miles. Still, I hope we shall be able to go there



quite often—at all events when we've got our donkey-cart.'

There was a door between the girls' room and the next, which Aunt Grace pointed out to them. 'My room is the next,' she said, 'so you'll be able to run in for any help you want. Jane will come in and do your hair in the mornings, but of course she won't always be there for the odds and ends of things that need doing.'

'I've done my own hair for quite a long time,' Emmeline was careful to inform her.

Aunt Grace did not seem much impressed. 'That's a good thing,' she observed cheerfully.

They went to Micky's room after that. They had to cross the passage and go down some steps in order to reach it, for it was in the part of the house which had been the original Fir-tree Cottage, where the rooms were all much lower—like cottage rooms in fact. There were but two of them on the upstairs floor, and the other one was to be the schoolroom. Underneath these two rooms were two others, now used as the scullery and larder. Micky's room was not quite so daintily furnished as his sisters', but it had a delightful view out on to the lawn and wood beyond, which made it a very pleasant one. What especially gratified Micky, however, was its being alone. 'You need a man to sleep in this part of

the house,' he remarked ; ' burglars would be sure to choose it to attack, because they'd think there would be fewer people to shoot them, so it's a jolly good thing it's me you've put here, and not the girls.'

' Micky always sleeps with his gun at the foot of his bed, *just in case*,' said Kitty.

Just at that moment the dinner-bell rang.

' Well, I must run and get ready,' said Aunt Grace. ' Can I lend anybody anything ?'

' Thank you ; we should be very grateful for a sponge,' said Emmeline, ' and, Aunt Grace, Micky *must* wash, mustn't he ? Just look at his hands !'

Micky made a face at her, and Aunt Grace said calmly : ' I expect he will wash : gentlemen usually do. But I feel it's a question we must leave to himself—at all events till his luggage comes.'

Emmeline flushed crimson. Then a choky feeling came into her throat ; her eyes began to sting, and she had to hurry out of the room lest she should burst out crying. It was not only that she was hurt for herself, but her sense of loyalty was grieved. Mary had always made Micky wash his hands before dinner. It would always be like this, she said to herself. The others would leave off all the good ways they had been taught, and whenever Emmeline, the only

one who would never forget, tried to remind them, Aunt Grace would snub her.

The chokiness and the stinging gradually passed off, and Emmeline could trust her voice again.

‘Kitty, you really needn’t have gone and told Aunt Grace about our only having one wash-stand and dressing-table at home,’ she snapped, as they were washing their hands.

‘Why ever not?’ asked Kitty, opening her eyes.

‘It makes us seem such babies,’ said Emmeline, crossly; ‘and, though of course you and Micky *are* babies, it’s rather hard on me.’

Fortunately Kitty was both sweet-tempered and tactful, so she made no answer, and the subject dropped. Emmeline, however, went down to the dining-room in anything but a good temper. Even the sight of Micky with spotlessly clean face and hands failed to soothe her; it was exactly like Micky to go and wash his hands just in order to make her seem in the wrong.

‘I think this clock is a little bit slow,’ said Aunt Grace, after a few minutes of eager chatter on the twins’ part and silence on Emmeline’s, which an onlooker might have described as sulky, but which she herself considered dignified. ‘Would you mind telling me the right time by that lovely little watch of yours, Emmeline?’

Wily Aunt Grace! That little gold watch which had been given her by her mother was the pride and joy of Emmeline's heart. Nothing so delighted her as to be asked the time. She gave the required information with the utmost graciousness ; the dining-room clock was exactly three minutes slow, it seemed, by the right time. Aunt Grace actually left her seat then and there and went to the mantelpiece to move on the minute-hand three spaces, and Emmeline began to wonder whether a person who cared so much about the right time, and showed such a proper amount of faith in her gold watch, could be so very worldly after all !

The children and Aunt Grace were just setting out for an exploring expedition in the wood after dinner when Emmeline suddenly felt Micky, who was walking by her side a little behind the others, press a hot, sticky coin into her hand.

'Why, what is it?' she asked, with a wonder which did not grow less when she discovered that it was a penny.

'It's to make up for making that face,' said Micky, who had grown very red. 'It was beastly rude of me, but for the moment I had quite forgotten about you being a girl.'

'Micky darling,' said Emmeline, so much touched and ashamed that the tears quite came into her eyes this time, 'I really can't take your



KITTY GAVE SUCH A BOUND OF DELIGHT THAT SHE NEARLY  
UPSET HER TEA.





penny. Besides, it was all my fault for interfering.'

'It wasn't,' said Micky stoutly. 'And anyhow, please do take it. I shan't feel a gentleman again till you do. Perhaps,' he added as an after-thought, 'you might spend it on some marbles. I've lost so many of mine down the mouse-hole and other places that there really aren't enough now when Kitty wants to play too, and perhaps if you had some of your own you wouldn't mind lending them us sometimes. But don't, of course, get them unless you like ; it's only a suggestion.'

## CHAPTER III

### THE FEUDAL CASTLE

THE early days of the children's new life were so full of interest and discoveries that even Emmeline did not manage to be nearly as homesick as she fancied she was.

To begin with, they had explored the whole house, a good deal of the wood, and every inch of the garden. They had discovered, moreover, that the said garden was the most delightful of play-places, chiefly because it was splendid for story games. It owed its excellence from this point of view to the fact that it contained a summer-house and a wood-pile, either or both of which could serve if need were as houses for the story people to live in, which, as Kitty remarked, 'made things seem ever so much realer.' To be sure, there were times when they had to pretend a good deal about the wood-pile; it just depended how Mr. Brown, the gardener, had arranged it, but it usually did for desert islands, where the dwellings might be supposed to be rather rough and ready,

and if the worst came to the worst there was always the summer-house.

For the whole of one glorious red-letter afternoon, indeed, the story people had revelled in the run of yet a third house. Just outside the back-yard was a little shed, always respectfully referred to by Micky and Kitty as 'Mr. Brown's study,' that being the place where he was accustomed to black the boots and clean the knives. On the afternoon in question Mr. Brown had stayed at home for some reason, so that his study was left undefended from the twins, who entered in and took possession. It made an even more desirable abode than the summer-house, for not only was it pervaded by a delicious smell of knife-powder and boot-blackening and mustiness, but also it was much better furnished; there were stools, and shelves, and knives, and boots, and packets of seeds and queer little pots, with nice messy stuff inside them, whereas in the summer-house there was nothing at all except a wooden bench, which was fixed to the wall and ran round three sides of it. So the story people lived there for the whole of that afternoon with great satisfaction to themselves, but, unhappily, not with any satisfaction at all to Jane when she came to fetch them in to tea and found Mr. Brown's usually neat 'study' turned almost inside out, and Micky and Kitty all over boot-blackening. Aunt Grace and Emmeline re-

turned from a garden-party to find not only the twins, but Alice, the little day-girl who had been inveigled into joining the game, in the deepest disgrace, and Jane muttering terrible things about 'warnings.' Fortunately the affair passed off without such dire consequences, but from that time forward Mr. Brown's study was forbidden ground.

It was a great disappointment ; but consolation was not long in coming, for it was only a very few days later that they discovered the Feudal Castle.

Aunt Grace had gone to a garden-party, and the three children were spending a blissful afternoon in the wood. Emmeline had curled herself up comfortably with a story-book, but the twins happened to be Red Indians that day, and had gone off on a desperate expedition against the Pale Faces. Before long they came rushing back to Emmeline, and insisted on dragging her off to see 'something wonderful.'

'Something wonderful' proved to be merely an empty cottage, hardly more than a hut, indeed, which, from its broken windows, torn thatch, worm-eaten door, and altogether forlorn appearance, looked as if it had been deserted for several years. Emmeline grasped its capabilities at first sight, and when the twins led her inside and triumphantly displayed a three-legged chair with a broken seat, and part of what had once been a table—when she saw the grate, rusty and cob-



webbed with disuse, but a real grate nevertheless, she was quite ready to agree with them that the story people had found their ideal house at last.

‘Isn’t this perfectly lovely?’ said Kitty, dancing about. ‘And, Emmeline, it has two rooms. Come and see the other one.’

The other room contained nothing at all except somebody’s very old boot, and a straw hat with the crown almost out, both of which Kitty pointed out as great finds. Emmeline, however, was left cold by these treasures.

‘They look as if they had belonged to rather dirty people,’ she said. ‘I think we’d better clear them out. Besides,’ she added, as Kitty looked disappointed, ‘this is a Feudal Castle, and they are not the sort of things people in Feudal Castles would wear.’

From that time forward the empty cottage was always known as the Feudal Castle. It was felt to be a most brilliant suggestion of Emmeline’s.

It would have quite spoiled the romance of the Feudal Castle if it had become a place of common resort, so from the very first the Bolton children bound themselves by a solemn pledge of secrecy not to reveal its existence to anyone. It was in an unfrequented part of the wood, where they themselves never happened to have gone before, and it did not strike them that perhaps other people might have done so.

Unfortunately they could not spend as much time in the Feudal Castle as they would have liked, for lessons began again the very day after it was discovered. In themselves lessons were pleasanter than they had ever been before, for Miss Miller, their new governess, who bicycled over each morning from one of the neighbouring villages, was brighter and more interesting than old-fashioned Miss Rogers. To be sure, Emmeline was at first inclined to resent it as a slight to Miss Rogers when she found herself expected to do by short division sums she had 'always been taught' to do by long ; but she was a sensible girl on the whole, and when once she had thoroughly mastered the new method, and found out how much quicker and neater it was than the old one, she began to take quite a pride in working her sums by it, and altogether became so docile and well-behaved a pupil that Miss Miller soon shared the general opinion that she was a model child.

To Emmeline's relief, and possibly also a little to her disappointment, she was not required to depart from the ways in which she had been brought up in any more important respects than that question of short division *versus* long. So far from amusing herself all Sunday, as Emmeline had a vague impression that fashionable people did, Aunt Grace attended more services than Mary herself had done, and was certainly just as

particular with regard to the children's Sunday observances ; indeed, in some ways she was even more so, for instead of being content with a bare repetition of the Catechism, she insisted on seeing that they clearly understood its meaning. And whereas Emmeline had formerly learned merely a verse or two of a hymn, Aunt Grace now expected her to learn the Collect and Gospel for the week, which was a far more serious task. Emmeline could not well grumble at it openly, but at the bottom of her heart she was possibly a little irritated with Aunt Grace for behaving so very differently from what she had pictured.

'There is going to be a Meeting in the village schoolroom to-night,' said Aunt Grace as she was pouring out tea one fine Saturday evening in September, about a month after the children's arrival at Woodsleigh. 'Mr. Faulkner—that's Mrs. Robinson's clergyman brother—is going to speak about the work of a Home for poor friendless boys and girls, of which he is the Chaplain. I wonder if you three would like to come.'

'I should like it very much,' said Emmeline.

'Will it be all talking, or will there be a magic lantern?' asked Micky, cautious before committing himself.

'Will it keep us up lovely and late?' cried Kitty.

'I believe there's to be a magic lantern, and we shan't be back till about ten, I suppose,' said Aunt

Grace; whereupon Kitty gave such a bound of delight that she nearly upset her tea, and Micky graciously expressed his opinion that the Meeting wouldn't be half bad.

'Work among children is always particularly interesting,' said Emmeline; 'their characters are still so plastic that they can be moulded into whatever shape you want.' She had once heard a visitor make the remark, and had treasured it up for future use.

'I didn't know you had had such a wide experience in bringing up young people, Emmeline,' said Aunt Grace, with a twinkle in her eye; and Emmeline grew rather red.

'The only condition I make to the twins' going is that they shall lie down after tea till it is time to start,' went on Aunt Grace after a moment, 'else they will be so very tired to-morrow morning.'

The twins looked rather blank at this. 'Will there be supper when we come home?' asked Micky.

'Yes,' said Aunt Grace, with a smile.

'Oh well, then, we'll lie down if you really want us to,' said Micky, and as it never occurred to Kitty to dispute what he had decided, the matter was regarded as settled.

On their way to the Meeting Aunt Grace told the children a little about the lecturer, whom she

had already met in London. For several years he had worked so devotedly in one of the very worst parts of the great city that at last his health had given way, and the doctors had said that for the present, at all events, it would be madness to take any but light country duty. At the time the verdict had almost broken his heart, for he was quite wrapped up in his people, above all in the poor little children of the parish, many of whom were being brought up as pickpockets. It had been a great consolation to him, however, when he was offered the Chaplaincy of this Home, where he knew that his work would still lie among children like those he had left.

‘Some of them, indeed, are the very same,’ added Aunt Grace. ‘For instance, I know of one boy there—that is, I think he is there still, though he must be about the age for leaving by now—whose life Mr. Faulkner once saved. He wasn’t a clergyman then, but a doctor, and this boy was lying at death’s door with diphtheria. He had been horribly neglected by some cruel people with whom he lived, and by the time Mr. Faulkner discovered him the illness had been allowed to get such a hold that the child would probably have been choked by some horrible stuff that was growing in his throat if Mr. Faulkner hadn’t sucked up the poisonous stuff through a tube which he put into the throat. Of course, it was



a terribly dangerous thing to do—indeed, he caught the illness through doing it—but it saved the boy's life. Before that time he had been one of the most abandoned little child-thieves in the parish, but ever since he has been absolutely devoted to Mr. Faulkner, and he is now growing up into a very fine character. I believe he hopes to go out as a Missionary one day, which would be a wonderful end for anyone who began as a little pickpocket.'

'Mr. Faulkner must be a saint,' said Emmeline.

'So he is,' agreed Aunt Grace heartily; 'but I don't know,' she added, with a whimsical little smile, 'whether he'll any more fit your idea of a saint than Fir-tree Cottage did that of a cottage.'

Aunt Grace was right. Emmeline could not help feeling a little shock of surprise when, soon after they had taken their seats in the school-room, a curly-haired little man, with a round, merry face, came and stood before the great white lantern-sheet, and she realised that this must be the Lecturer.

'Why, that man's a little boy!' remarked Kitty, in a stage whisper.

And, indeed, there was something very boyish in his appearance. Not that they had much time to study it, for in another moment the lights were lowered, a hymn appeared on the lantern-sheet,

and after it had been sung through lustily the lecture began.

The first picture shown represented a room in London—such a filthy, miserable room as the children could never even have imagined. On a ragged mattress in one corner lay a little boy, so thin that he was more like a skeleton than a child. He had been almost dying, it appeared, when he had been discovered by the Society to which the Home belonged, and rescued from death, or worse, for the room had been kept by a wicked man who was bringing up this child and a number of others to a life of crime.

The next picture was far less harrowing to the feelings of the audience, for it showed the same boy fat, and clean and comfortable after a few years spent in the beautiful Home among the Surrey hills, where Mr. Faulkner was now Chaplain. He had since joined the Royal Navy, said the clergyman, and was now learning to serve his King and country as a brave man should, instead of making a livelihood by robbery.

‘Perhaps he’ll be one of my men some day,’ whispered Micky, who had every intention of ending his life as an Admiral.

Picture followed picture, showing tragic scenes of child life in darkest London, varied from time to time by groups of prosperous children whom the Society had adopted. On the whole it was

much like other lectures of its kind, but the Bolton children, who had been at nothing of the sort before, listened and gazed entranced, and felt very regretful when it was over, and a final hymn and a collection brought the proceedings to a close.

Mrs. Robinson, the Vicar's wife, hurried forward to speak to Aunt Grace as soon as the lights were turned up and people were beginning to disperse.

'You'll come to supper with us to-morrow, won't you?' she said; 'I know my brother is much looking forward to meeting you again.'

A pretty rosy colour came into Aunt Grace's cheeks. 'Thank you; I shall be delighted to come,' she said, and she looked as though she meant it.

The Lecturer himself came up to them the next moment, and greeted Aunt Grace as a friend.

'You'll let me see you home?' he asked, eagerly; 'that lane is so long and dark—I know it of old.'

'Thank you; but, you see, I have a very sufficient bodyguard in two nieces and a nephew,' said Aunt Grace, laughing, 'and I hear Mrs. Robinson just inviting the churchwarden and his wife to go home with her for the express purpose of meeting you, so I'm afraid it wouldn't do to take you away from them.'

‘Well, I shall come to-morrow, then,’ said Mr. Faulkner. ‘I want to be introduced to your bodyguard’; and he gave the children a mischievous look that made him appear more like a schoolboy than ever.

‘I do love people who have twinkly smiles,’ remarked Kitty to Micky, on the way home after the meeting in the village schoolroom.

Micky’s great blue eyes had a rapt, far-away expression.

‘I wonder if it’s worth while,’ he said thoughtfully.

‘If what’s worth while?’ asked Kitty.

‘To be so horrid and clean as those children were in the Homes, even if you do get plenty to eat.’

‘But, Micky, we are clean—sometimes,’ said Kitty. It was just as well she qualified the statement.

‘Yes, but we are used to it,’ said Micky; ‘things aren’t half as bad when you are used to them.’

‘What part of the lecture did you like best?’ asked Kitty of Emmeline, who was walking along in dreamy silence.

‘Oh, I don’t know,’ said Emmeline. She spoke without thinking, for she did know perfectly well. Mr. Faulkner had spoken of a little twelve-year-old girl named Kathleen, whose

pocket-money had been the very first subscription towards the building of the particular Home where he was Chaplain. The heart of this child had become so full of noble pity for her poor little brothers and sisters of the slums that she spent most of her playtime working among them and for them, and came to have such a wonderful influence on them, that they looked upon her more as an angel than an ordinary human girl. The story had fired Emmeline's imagination, and she was dreaming over it still.

'Didn't you enjoy the meeting, Aunt Grace?' asked Kitty, taking her aunt's hand.

'Yes, dear. Why do you ask?'

'Because you seem so grave, somehow—like when we've been naughty.'

'I was thinking, I suppose,' said Aunt Grace, laughing, and for the rest of the walk she chatted merrily about all kinds of things.

'It's easy to see *she* doesn't care much about the poor children,' thought Emmeline, feeling well satisfied with herself; 'if she did, she wouldn't make so many jokes.'

All the way home, and while they were having supper afterwards, Emmeline went on thinking of the little girl who had spent her pocket-money and her playtime on the poor.

'Do you know,' she said abruptly, in the middle of her basin of soup, 'I think it would



be very nice if we had a collecting-box for that Home. I've got a shilling in my money-box upstairs which I'll put in for a start. I did mean to have saved up to buy "Queechy," but I'll gladly give that up for the sake of the poor little children. Kitty and Micky, if you were unselfish you'd give up your money too.'

The twins looked blank, and instead of being touched at Emmeline's self-sacrifice Aunt Grace said rather sharply, 'Really, Emmeline, it is not your business to settle what the twins ought to give. Start a box if you like, but I can't have you forcing the others to contribute to it.'

Emmeline tried to reflect that this was only what she might have expected; people's worldly relations always did persecute them when they wanted to do anything specially beautiful or unselfish; but she could not help looking hurt, and Kitty, who never could bear anyone to be snubbed, broke in:

'Oh, but she didn't mean to force us, Aunt Grace. It was only a suggestion. You shall have my sixpence, Emmeline—at least, three-pence of it will be from me and the other three-pence from Micky. Then it won't matter his saving his own money for a new gun. You see, it's really *necessary* he should have one that's not broken when he sleeps in such a lonely part of the house.'

‘Of course,’ agreed Aunt Grace, smiling, as she twisted one of Kitty’s long curls between her fingers. ‘Should you like to ask Mr. Faulkner for a collecting-box when he calls to-morrow, Emmeline?’ she added, in an unusually kind voice for a persecuting relation.

‘No ; my extra money-box will do quite well.’ said Emmeline shortly.

The extra money-box had been given her by Micky on her last birthday. Having dropped a carefully treasured sixpence down that same mouse-hole which had been fatal to so many of his marbles, Micky had been at his wits’ end what to give Emmeline till the happy thought had struck him of presenting her with his own money-box, then standing empty and useless. Emmeline had thanked him for it graciously at the time, but Micky had always had an uneasy feeling that it was rather a mean makeshift of a present, so he was delighted to find it turning out at last to be really of some use.

‘I think that’s a splendid plan,’ he said ; ‘you’ll be able to open it whenever you want to count how much money you’ve got, which you can’t do with the ordinary stupid sort of missionary-box.’

‘There’s a good deal in that,’ said Aunt Grace. ‘See, here’s a bright new shilling as a contribution to the extra money-box’s first meal. And now I think it’s time all you young people went to bed.’

For some time after she had got into bed that evening Emmeline lay awake dreaming day-dreams of that twelve-year-old girl who had been so wonderfully good to the poor. Strangely enough, however, the child of her visions was no longer a stranger, but Emmeline herself—Emmeline, who had mysteriously become ennobled, and who was known to everyone as ‘the saintly Lady Emmeline.’

## CHAPTER IV

### SUNDAY

THERE was a letter waiting on Emmeline's plate when she came down to breakfast next morning. Letters were rare and joyful events to the Bolton children, and Emmeline thought it very annoying of the servants to troop in for prayers before she had had time to glance at the contents of this one.

Sunday prayers, however, never took long, and Emmeline was soon free to fly back to her letter. To her great delight it proved to be from Mary.

Mary began by saying how very much she was missing them all, and how often she thought of them and wondered how they were getting on. Then followed the really exciting part of the letter :

‘Do you think your Auntie would let you three come over and spend the day with me next Saturday? Eastwich Fair will be going on, and it would be nice for you to go and see it, especially as you were disappointed last year on account of the scarlet fever being in the town. Tell Master Micky he shall have shrimps for tea if he can

come, and give him and Miss Kitty each a kiss from me.'

Emmeline looked up from her letter with sparkling eyes. 'Oh, Aunt Grace,' she cried, 'this is a letter from Mary, asking us three to go and spend the day with her next Saturday! The Fair will be going on—that's why she is asking us just now. We may go, mayn't we?'

'Three cheers for Mary!' cried Kitty, jumping up and down, as her custom was when excited.

'For she's a jolly good fellow!' chimed in Micky, in what Aunt Grace called his sea-captain's voice.

'Have you been used to going to this Fair other years?' asked Aunt Grace, who was looking rather troubled as she poured out the tea.

'No, because till Grandmamma Moorby died we always used to go and stay with her for August and September, and last year there was the scarlet fever; but we may go this year, mayn't we, Aunt Grace?' repeated Emmeline a little impatiently.

'I must think about it, Emmeline,' said Aunt Grace quietly. 'Kitty, will you pass Emmeline her tea—for one thing, Saturday isn't a whole holiday, you know.'

'Oh, but we can work on Wednesday afternoon,' said Emmeline; 'one whole holiday comes to the same thing as two half ones'



‘Not quite,’ said Aunt Grace; ‘your afternoon work is never so much as what you do in the morning. But we’ll see whether it can be arranged.’

“‘We’ll see’ always means “yes” in the end said Kitty.

‘No, Kitty,’ said Aunt Grace, rather distressed, ‘I don’t at all promise. I should like you to have the pleasure, but I don’t yet know whether it will be possible.’

‘Oh, Aunt Grace!’ cried Kitty, pouting a little, ‘you *can’t* not let us go to the Fair. There are such *darling* baby elephants!’

‘Yes,’ added Micky, ‘and there are boats which go up and down, and up and down, and round and round, till you get as lovely and seasick as if you were on the real sea!’ Micky spoke without any thought of sarcasm.

‘Dear me! I should be very sorry to stand in the way of Micky’s having the pleasure of being seasick!’ said Aunt Grace, with one of her funny little smiles. ‘I’ll see what can be done, children. But don’t say any more about it just now.’

The twins were a good-humoured little couple, and quite aware that Aunt Grace was always glad to give them pleasure when she could, so they left off teasing to go to the Fair and devoted their attention to their boiled eggs. Eggs were a special Sunday treat. Emmeline, however, ate

even her egg in glum silence. Perhaps it was scarcely consistent for a young lady who judged her aunt so severely for worldliness to set her heart on attending a fair, but the best of us are inconsistent sometimes. Besides, it was not only the possible loss of the pleasure itself which she resented; there was Mary's disappointment to be thought of—dear Mary, who had been like a mother to them all while Aunt Grace was enjoying herself in London. Altogether Emmeline felt that she did well to be angry, and went on nursing her grievance all the morning.

The day was a wet one. In the morning it drizzled, though not enough to keep the party from church, but at lunch-time the rain began to descend in such torrents that the usual Sunday walk was clearly out of the question.

'I've got some letters I must write,' said Aunt Grace as they rose from the table, 'but I shall have finished them before very long, and then I shall be very pleased to go on with "The Pilgrim's Progress."'

She went to the drawing-room, where Emmeline followed her, with the intention of writing an aggrieved letter to Mary, while Micky and Kitty repaired to the schoolroom on some business of their own.

Somehow Emmeline's grievance did not seem quite so impressive when she came to write it

down, or perhaps it was that her pen still travelled too slowly for her thoughts. In any case she grew bored presently, and wandered upstairs to the schoolroom to see what the twins were doing. Judging from the eager sound of their voices as she drew near the schoolroom door, it seemed to be something interesting.

She found them sitting on the floor, playing with their bricks.

‘Well, I never!’ she exclaimed with a very good imitation of Jane’s voice of righteous wrath. ‘To think of playing with bricks on Sunday! You *know* Mary never let us.’ Emmeline spoke in a quite sincere belief that it was her duty as an elder sister to keep the twins in the way that they should go, but perhaps her elder-sisterly mission was all the easier to-day because she was in a bad humour with the world in general.

The twins only giggled in an exasperating way. ‘Mary isn’t here now,’ sang out Micky.

‘And I’m sure Aunt Grace wouldn’t mind,’ added Kitty defiantly.

The hard lump which Emmeline knew so well at such times rose suddenly in her throat. So even the twins were going over to the enemy! ‘Well, of all the horrid, forgetting children!’ she exclaimed hotly, while the tears rushed to her eyes, and again the twins laughed in a provoking way.

‘Why, what’s happening here?’ asked Aunt Grace’s voice as she opened the schoolroom door.

‘It is a Sunday game—really and truly it is,’ declared Kitty.

‘It isn’t,’ said Emmeline. ‘They would never have thought of playing with bricks on Sunday at home.’

‘It is quite a Sunday game,’ repeated Kitty. ‘We are starting a Home for brick widows and orphans. The long bricks are the widows and the little ones the orphans. It was last night that made us think of it.’

‘Yes,’ said Micky, ‘to-morrow we shall play that the brick-box is a thieves’ den, and the little bricks will be clever little boy-thieves, and the big ones grown-up burglars. That will be much more exciting, only Kitty thought the Home was best for Sunday.’

‘I agree with Kitty,’ said Mr. Faulkner, who had come into the schoolroom behind Aunt Grace without the children noticing him in the heat of the argument. Emmeline looked rather abashed now that she was aware of his presence, but the twins were dauntless as ever.

‘Well, suppose you put the widows and orphans back into the Home now,’ Aunt Grace suggested, ‘and then, if you come down into the drawing-room, Mr. Faulkner will tell some inter-

esting stories about the real orphans. Won't you, Mr. Faulkner?'

'I'll tell stories certainly,' he replied; 'whether they'll be interesting is another matter.'

'Oh yes, they will,' said Kitty. 'We were ever so interested last night, weren't we, Micky?'

'That was partly because of the lantern,' said Micky frankly, as he flung unfortunate brick orphans violently back into the brick-box Home; 'but the stories were decent, too,' he added kindly.

A few minutes later the whole party were seated in the drawing-room. The children listened with rapt attention as Mr. Faulkner told stories, some so funny that his audience went into fits of uproarious laughter, and some so pathetic that Aunt Grace's eyes filled with tears. Even Emmeline was charmed out of her crossness, and became like a different being.

'Do tell us some more about that wonderful little Kathleen who was so very good to the poor—the child you spoke about last night,' she pleaded, as Mr. Faulkner paused for a moment.

'No,' said Aunt Grace, almost sharply for her; 'that was the only part of last night's lecture I didn't enjoy. I think that little girl was in a false position altogether.'

Mr. Faulkner looked decidedly taken aback. 'But surely you approve of children trying to help their less happy brothers and sisters?' he said.



‘Certainly,’ said Aunt Grace, ‘but the help should be of a suitable kind. That child was encouraged to patronise people who were in many ways better and wiser than herself, and certainly far more experienced. I am sure such patronage does harm, not only to those on whom it is bestowed, but to the child who gives it. I expect your little girl soon became self-conscious and self-conceited, however pure her motives may have been to start with.’

‘I can’t say as to that, for I never knew the child,’ said Mr. Faulkner, ‘but as to the effect of her influence, I am sure from many things I have heard that it was nothing but good.’

‘Mr. Faulkner, can you turn coach-wheels?’ broke in Micky anxiously. He felt much inclined to develop a hero-worship for Mr. Faulkner, but could not quite make up his mind to do so till he was satisfied on this important point.

‘Rather!’ said Mr. Faulkner. ‘I’d show you now if it wasn’t Sunday, but I’ll tell you what—if Miss Bolton will let me, I’ll come again to-morrow afternoon, and you and I will have a coach-wheel exhibition. By the way, I suppose you can turn them yourself?’

‘Oh yes, Micky could go in for a coach-wheel championship,’ said Aunt Grace proudly.

‘And can you ride bare-back?’ pursued Micky.

'I have done so on occasion,' said Mr. Faulkner, laughing. 'Can you?'

'Well, I haven't yet,' Micky owned, 'but I mean to when our donkey comes. We're going to buy a donkey, you know, as soon as Aunt Grace gets her next quarter's money.'

So the merry talk went on, while all the time Emmeline sat by in silent indignation. To think of Aunt Grace daring to disapprove of the wonderful child who was Emmeline's ideal! But Aunt Grace wanted everybody to be as frivolous and worldly as herself!

## CHAPTER V

### A VISIT TO MARY

'I HAVE been asking the Robinsons about the Fair,' said Aunt Grace, on Monday morning, 'and I think it will be all right for you to go under Mary's charge. But I don't want it to be on a Saturday. I wonder if she would be able to have you to-day week instead.'

'It might put out her plans to change the day,' objected Emmeline, more from a perverse desire to find fault than because she seriously thought so. 'Why shouldn't we go on a Saturday?'

'Because I don't choose for you to go on a school-holiday, when the place will be crowded with children,' said Aunt Grace. 'There's no saying what you mightn't catch. If Mary can't have you on the Monday I'm afraid you must give up the idea of going to the Fair, but I think it would be worth while to write and ask her.'

'Very well,' said Emmeline, in a voice which sounded more sulky than pleased.

‘Oh dear, shall I ever understand Emmeline?’ sighed Aunt Grace to herself, when her niece had gone off to the schoolroom. ‘Micky and Kitty are dear little things, but I always seem somehow to rub Emmeline the wrong way. I thought she would have been so pleased about this Fair.’

So at the bottom of her heart Emmeline was, but a kind of cross-grained loyalty made her resent Aunt Grace’s having thought it needful to consult the Robinsons as to whether a treat proposed by Mary was suitable. It was that feeling which had been at the bottom of her ungracious manner.

Emmeline’s objection that Mary might be inconvenienced by the change of dates proved a groundless one. A warm letter arrived in the course of a day or two to say that she would be only too much delighted to see the children on Monday, if that suited best; and so without further ado it was arranged.

Three eager heads were craned out of the carriage window, when on the following Monday morning the Woodsleigh train slowly steamed into Eastwich Station. Everyone wanted to be the first to catch sight of Mary. ‘There she is!’ screamed Micky, and ‘I see her!’ shrieked Kitty, as they fixed on two different ladies, neither of whom proved on closer view to resemble Mary in the least.

‘But wherever can Mary be?’ cried Kitty, when she was convinced of her mistake.

‘I thought she would have been sure to come and meet us,’ said Mick, in an injured voice.

‘We’ll wait here a few minutes, just in case something has hindered her,’ said Emmeline, ‘and then if she doesn’t come we’ll make our own way to the house.’

The few minutes passed, and still there was no sign of Mary, so they presently left the station and set out by themselves for her house. Emmeline was in the best of good humours, and made herself quite charming to her little brother and sister. She liked nothing so well as to find herself in a position of authority.

The walk was not long. In a very few minutes they were bursting open Mary’s front door, and rushing down the little passage to the kitchen, with joyous cries of ‘Mary, we’re here!’ ‘Mary, we’ve come!’

Mary was seated in an arm-chair by the fire. ‘Take care, dearie,’ she explained, as Micky was charging at her recklessly. ‘I’ve sprained my ankle rather badly, and though it doesn’t hurt so much now, it wouldn’t do to knock it. I do feel that vexed with myself for having done such a stupid thing to-day of all days. Well, my darlings, this is nice to see you again! Why,



Master Micky, I do believe you've grown even in these few weeks since I saw you.'

'I must have grown too, then,' chimed in Kitty: 'our two heads come to just exactly the same place on the schoolroom door.' Kitty was quite willing that Micky should be acknowledged her superior in every other way, but that he should have the palm for tallness was rather too much even for her twin-sisterly devotion.

'So you have, my darling,' said Mary, while Emmeline anxiously asked after the sprain.

'Oh, it won't be anything much,' said Mary, 'but I'm afraid I shan't be able to use my foot for the next few days, and what bothers me is how you're to go to the Fair without me. Of course, it's as quiet as it can be just now—it's only on Saturday afternoons and in the evenings it gets a bit rough—so I don't see myself how you could possibly come to harm under Miss Emmeline's charge, but maybe Miss Bolton wouldn't think it quite the thing. If only I knew anyone whom I could ask to go with you, but I don't—not at such short notice,' and Mary's pleasant face looked thoroughly worried.

'I'm sure Aunt Grace wouldn't mind our going with Emmeline,' said Kitty.

'No, she's much too jolly,' agreed Micky.

Emmeline could not feel so sure. An uncomfortable remembrance came to her that Aunt

Grace had specially said they might go under Mary's charge. Did that mean that they might go by themselves now that Mary was unable to escort them?

'Well, what do you think, Miss Emmeline dear?' asked Mary, anxiously.

'Oh, Emmeline,' pleaded Kitty, as Emmeline still hesitated, 'of course she wouldn't mind! Why you're twelve years old—almost grown up.'

That decided Emmeline. She could not bear to lose prestige in the eyes of the little sister who thought her almost grown up. 'I'm sure Aunt Grace couldn't mind,' she said boldly; 'she knows I'm quite to be trusted to look after the others.'

'That you are, my darling,' agreed Mary, rather too easily reassured—as a nurse it had been her one weakness that she never could endure to disappoint the children—'and Micky and Kitty will be as good as gold, I'm sure'; whereupon the twins assumed the expressions of a pair of youthful saints.

'May Micky and I look at the picture Bible?' suggested Kitty meekly. Whenever the twins visited that house—they had often done so in the days when Mary was still their nurse—one of two amusements was the recognised order of the day. Either they played—not the real game, but one of their own invention—with a set of

elaborate Indian chessmen brought home by a sailor brother of Mary's; or else they looked at the pictures of a fascinating old French Bible which had somehow come into the possession of Mary's grandfather.

'And now, dearie, tell me all about how you've been getting on,' said Mary, as soon as there was quiet in the room, owing to the twins having become blissfully absorbed in the picture of the plague of frogs in the old French Bible. It always sent delicious thrills through them to discover frogs hopping lightheartedly out of Pharaoh's very modern looking soup tureen, or creeping out from between his bedclothes.

'Aunt Grace is kind in her own way,' acknowledged Emmeline—she was always candid about people's merits even when she disapproved of them—'but living with her isn't like living with you, Mary.'

'Well, dear, it's not to be expected it should be, seeing that she's a young lady, and me only an old nurse,' said Mary simply; 'but I'm sure whatever changes there are will work out right in the end, for I know she is fond of you.'

'Yes, she's fond of us—that is, she is fond of the twins,' said Emmeline, 'but she doesn't care about the sort of things mother cared about, and you care about. What she really cares for is dressing prettily and going to parties, and so on.'

‘I don’t think, dear, we can judge what’s in other people’s hearts,’ said Mary, slowly. She felt somewhat at a loss how to answer Emmeline, for she was too good and loyal to encourage the child in criticising her aunt, but she herself had been brought up to regard most amusements as dangerous, if not actually sinful, and there was no doubt that Aunt Grace was very gay and merry.

‘But I’m not judging what’s in her heart, but what she says,’ persisted Emmeline. ‘I’ll just tell you what she said the other day’; and she related the conversation with Mr. Faulkner about the little Kathleen who had been like an angel to the poor. ‘*You* don’t think it’s true that children only do harm when they try to do work of that sort?’ she ended.

‘No, indeed,’ said Mary; ‘I think a guileless child can often do more than anyone else to touch a sinner’s heart.’ Mary spoke with earnest conviction. It was true that she had never actually come across such a young person as the guileless child of whom she spoke, but she none the less firmly believed in the type.

‘Mary, isn’t it nearly time for dinner?’ broke in Micky at this point. The twins had just reached the last meal of the Israelites before they left Egypt, and the picture had put it into Micky’s head to be hungry.

‘And, Mary, may we set the table?’ chimed in Kitty.

They were in the midst of setting the table when Mary’s brother George came in from work. He was a burly, good-natured, red-faced person, chiefly remarkable for pockets which bulged out with apples and sweets, and for certain time-honoured jokes which the children always greeted with the cordiality due to such old friends.

‘George always pretends he’s going to put us in his pockets,’ Micky had remarked to Kitty on one occasion ; ‘it’s getting a bit stale.’

‘Yes, but we *must* laugh,’ said Kitty : ‘he’d be so disappointed if we didn’t,’ and accordingly the twins always laughed uproariously as soon as George so much as mentioned his pockets.

They sat down to table after full justice had been done to these pleasantries, and the meal that followed might have been one grand joke from beginning to end to judge from the continual laughter that went on. Mary had remembered everybody’s favourite dishes ; there was liver and bacon to please the twins, pancakes for Emmeline, though Shrove Tuesday was about half a year distant, and baked potatoes for them all. When at last everybody had eaten as much of these good things as they could manage, and George had gone back to work, it was high time to start for the Fair.



'I wonder what time I had better have tea ready for you,' said Mary, as they were putting on their hats. 'Did Miss Bolton say you were to go back by any particular train?'

'She said either the 5.5 or the 5.25,' replied Emmeline; 'it doesn't really matter which, for she isn't going to meet us at the station. She's going to a croquet-party at the Vicarage this afternoon, so it would not be convenient, and you see she always trusts me to look after the others.' Perhaps Emmeline would not have dragged this in if her conscience had been quite at ease about the afternoon's expedition.

'Well, then, I'll expect you back to tea about a quarter past four,' said Mary. 'Miss Emmeline will be able to keep count of time with that dear little watch of hers. And now, my darlings, it's high time you were off, or you'll have to come back almost as soon as you get there.'

'It's a horrid shame you can't come too, Mary,' said Micky; and his sisters declared that it wouldn't be half so much fun without her.

'Yes, I don't know when I've been so disappointed about anything,' said Mary, with unfeigned regret; 'but you'll have to tell me all about it when you come back to tea. I shall be looking forward to that all the afternoon.'

## CHAPTER VI

### DIAMOND JUBILEE JONES

PERHAPS just because she had been looking forward to the treat so eagerly for days past, Emmeline's feeling, when she actually found herself at the Fair, was one of disappointment. There, to be sure, were the gaily decorated booths, there were the merry-go-rounds of all kinds and degrees, varying from the ring of wooden horses worked by hand, to the alarming-looking motors which raced round and round at break-neck speed ; there were the side-shows, with their air of entrancing mystery to be revealed on payment of one penny ; there, in fact, was everything she had been led to expect, but somehow the whole did not make the glittering, fairy-like effect she had been picturing to herself. Besides, even at this hour of the afternoon, there were a good many rough-looking people about, and Emmeline did not like rough people.

But if Emmeline was disappointed, Micky and Kitty were not. All the merry-go-rounds were playing different tunes ; all the people who had

anything to sell or to show were proclaiming its merits at the tops of their voices ; the public was enjoying itself in a very loud fashion ; in fact, everybody was doing everything in the noisiest manner possible, and the discord of sounds produced was deafening and delightful to the twins.

‘Isn’t it lovely?’ said Kitty to Micky, as she skipped about ; but Micky did not hear, for he was engaged in a scornful colloquy with the owner of the hand-worked wooden horses.

‘Think I’m going to ride on one of those things?’ he was demanding indignantly. ‘Do you take me for a kid?’

‘Emmeline,’ clamoured Kitty, ‘when may we go and see the darling elephants?’

‘You girls can do what you like,’ said Micky grandly, ‘but I’m off for a motor-drive.’

Aunt Grace had provided each twin with a shilling, and Emmeline with a florin to spend at the Fair, so that there was plenty of money for such luxuries as motor-drives.

The motor-drive, or rather several motor-drives, and the call on the darling elephants were gone through in due course, and then Micky fell under the spell of the cocoanut-shy.

‘Do come on, Micky!’ entreated Emmeline, after he had made many unsuccessful shots ; ‘I believe they’re fixed——’

The rest of her sentence was lost in indignant astonishment; someone had flicked one of the little feather brooms known as 'fair-ticklers' full in her face !

'Come along, Micky,' she exclaimed, with angry impatience; 'I'm sick of this horrid place. Why, what are you doing ?'

For Micky had suddenly flung down the ball which he was about to shy at the cocoanuts, and was rushing after a wretched little street arab of about his own size.

'Give it up! You little cad!' he shouted, as he caught hold of the boy's ragged jacket. 'Give it up this minute!'

'I ain't got nothing,' whined the boy, trying vainly to wriggle out of Micky's grasp.

'Yes, you have. I saw you take it,' and to Emmeline's intense surprise, Micky suddenly wrenched her own purse out of the street arab's dirty hand. Her thoughts had been so much taken up by the fair-tickler that she had not even felt it go.

'I'd give you a jolly good thrashing if you weren't such a muff!' exclaimed Micky.

Emmeline collected her astonished wits with an effort.

'Well, you *are* a naughty little boy,' she remarked severely; 'it would just serve you right if we gave you up to the police.'

The ragged little urchin began to howl. If he had really been much afraid he would probably have run away, but this did not strike Emmeline, and her heart softened towards him, especially when he sobbed: 'I ain't had nothing to eat since yesterday morning.'

Kitty, who was looking on with wide-open pitying eyes, gave Emmeline's hand a sudden squeeze.

'May I give him the money I've got left?' she whispered.

'Not till we know more about him,' said Emmeline. 'Is your father out of work?' she added to the boy, with some vague idea that it was the correct thing to ask questions of that kind before giving alms.

'I ain't got no father nor mother neither,' he replied, still in his professional whine.

'Who looks after you, then?' asked Emmeline, more gently.

'Old Sally Grimes,' was the answer, 'but she ain't give me nothing to eat since yesterday morning, and she beat me something awful!'

'Come along with me,' said Emmeline. A sudden idea had taken possession of her.

'What for?' asked the boy half suspiciously.

'I'm going to give you something to eat,' said Emmeline.

The boy's eyes glistened. It had been a



picturesque exaggeration to say that he had had nothing to eat since yesterday morning, but he was really very hungry.

'Thank you kindly, lady,' he said, and Emmeline flushed with gratification. 'Lady' sounded so much grander than 'Missy.'

'What are you going to give him to eat?' asked Micky, with interest. 'There's a man selling ice-cream over there.'

Almsgiving was impossible to Micky just then, for he had spent all his money (his last two cocoa-nut shies had been paid for by Kitty), but he was quite willing to help with advice.

'And there's a girl selling delicious toffee, only she calls it candy,' said Kitty. 'Why does she call it candy, Emmeline?'

'I shouldn't think of giving a starving boy ice-cream, or toffee either,' said Emmeline. 'We'll go where there's something more sensible to eat than what you can buy at this Fair. Come along, children.'

On the whole, the twins were not unwilling to leave the Fair. It was rather sad to go so soon, but less so now that twopence of Kitty's represented all their remaining fortune than it would have been half an hour before, and when even that solitary twopence had been spent on the mysterious toffee that called itself 'candy,' their willingness to forsake the Fair became eagerness

to see what new thing was about to happen. It was as good as a story-game come true to wander through the streets of Eastwich with this delightfully ragged dirty boy.

‘Where are we going, Emmeline? What are we going to do?’ they cried.

‘You’ll see,’ said Emmeline.

As a matter of fact, she did not quite know herself.

They came out of the Fair into a region of squalid little shops; squalid, at least, they appeared to Emmeline, but her protégé saw them from a different point of view.

‘Please, lady, the fried fish and ’taters in there is all right,’ he hinted wistfully, as they passed an overwhelming smell.

Emmeline hesitated. She had vaguely intended taking him to some superior Tea-Rooms in the High Street, where she herself had sometimes gone for a treat, but now she came to think of it, perhaps the fried-fish shop would be more fitting in this case.

‘I think we’ll go in here, then,’ she decided, to her guest’s obvious satisfaction.

A shopman with a much stained apron gazed at the party in some astonishment as they entered, but he seemed to think Emmeline a trustworthy person, for he made no demur when she ordered a plate of fried fish and potatoes.

‘What’s your name, little boy?’ asked Emmeline, when the shopman had disappeared into the back regions, and they were seated waiting at a grimy table covered with American leather in imitation of marble.

‘Diamond Jub’lee Jones,’ replied the boy glibly.

‘What an extraordinary name!’ exclaimed Emmeline, and the twins began to giggle.

‘I were born on Diamond Jub’lee day,’ he explained, with evident pride.

‘Well, Diamond Jubilee, I’m sure with such a splendid birthday you ought to be a very good, honest boy,’ said Emmeline, by way of improving the occasion. ‘What would Queen Victoria have said if anyone had told her that a boy born on her Diamond Jubilee would ever take to picking people’s pockets? Why, she would have been awfully upset.’

Diamond Jubilee looked round the shop furtively, as though to assure himself that there was nobody within hearing. ‘That ain’t to please meself I picks pockets,’ he mumbled; ‘that’s Mother Grimes. She beats us something awful if we don’t bring nothing home.’

‘You don’t mean to say she is bringing you up as a thief!’ exclaimed Emmeline, in a horrified voice.

What Diamond Jubilee might have answered will never be known, for just at that moment the

shopman came back with the fried fish and potatoes, and private conversation was stopped for the time being. Diamond Jubilee threw himself on the food like a ravenous animal, while Micky and Kitty looked on with a fascinated stare. From their point of view, his table manners were quite as well worth watching as those of the elephants they had just been visiting.

Emmeline's point of view was a more fastidious one, and at any other time she might have been disgusted, but to-day it was with a certain tolerance that she saw Diamond Jubilee put his knife into his mouth. His last words had shed a halo of romance round his unkempt head. It was to children like him that Kathleen had been a good angel.

With that last thought, a plan flashed into Emmeline's brain—a plan so strange and startling that it almost took her breath away for the moment, and so glorious that it made her want to jump and dance about the shop, only that would have been out of keeping with the dignity of the wonderful plan.

‘Diamond Jubilee, if you have quite done, will you come outside? I’ve something important to tell you.’ Emmeline's heart was thumping so that she could hardly get the words out.

‘Well, there ain't nothing more on this here plate,’ said Diamond Jubilee, giving it a final

scrape. Perhaps he hoped that she would offer a second helping, but she scarcely even heard what he said.

‘Stop a bit, miss!’ called the shopman, as she seized hold of Diamond Jubilee’s arm, and began hurrying him out of the shop. ‘You haven’t paid, miss.’

‘Oh, bother!’ cried Emmeline, impatiently. ‘I was quite forgetting. How much is it?’

‘Three halfpence, please, miss.’

Her fingers were trembling with excitement as she fumbled for the money in her little brown leather purse.

‘That’ll be right, thank you, miss,’ he said, as she threw it down on the counter.

At last they were out in the street again, and she was free to tell the marvellous plan with which for the last two minutes she had been almost bursting. ‘Diamond Jubilee,’ she demanded, again laying her hand in a motherly way on his very dirty and rather smelly jacket sleeve, ‘don’t you feel a longing sometimes for a better life?’

Diamond Jubilee stared at her as though he did not understand the question.

‘Wouldn’t you like to get away from Mother Grimes, and go to live with people who would teach you to be a good boy and always be kind to you?’ she asked, the words almost tumbling over one another in her eagerness.



‘Well,’ said Diamond Jubilee, ‘maybe I would, maybe I wouldn’t.’

Emmeline was conscious of a sudden chill of disappointment. This was not the way she had pictured him hailing the prospect of deliverance from Mother Grimes and his present life. But perhaps his indifferent manner simply meant that he did not even yet quite understand.

‘Because if you would like it,’ she went on very slowly and distinctly, ‘I’ll take you home with me.’

‘Emmeline!’ gasped Kitty, ‘whatever *will* Aunt Grace say?’ Even to her simple mind, it seemed a somewhat unusual proceeding to adopt a strange boy out of the streets on the strength of his having tried to pick one’s pocket.

Micky, however, saw things from a less conventional standpoint. ‘I say, Emmeline, what a stunning lark!’ he exclaimed. ‘Why, it will be almost like keeping another dog!’

Meantime, Diamond Jubilee was regarding Emmeline with a critical stare, very unlike the deferential gratitude she felt he ought to have shown. ‘Garn!’ he said, suspiciously. ‘You’re kidding me, ain’t you?’

‘I don’t know what you mean by kidding you,’ said Emmeline, with dignity. ‘If you come home with me you shall have plenty to eat and a nice

house to live in. I promise you that, and I always keep my promises.'

Even after Emmeline's assurance that he should have plenty to eat and a nice home, Diamond Jubilee did not look as if he altogether trusted her. Still, she had just given him the best meal he had had for a long time past, and life with Mother Grimes had been particularly unpleasant lately. . . . 'Well,' he said doubtfully, 'maybe—I'll come.'

'Does that mean you will come, or you won't?' said Emmeline.

He gave her another critical stare before answering, 'I don't mind if I do.'

She knew that this was a way of accepting her offer, and though she could not help feeling nettled, it was too late now to draw back. Besides, it might only be an unfortunate manner which made Diamond Jubilee seem so indifferent. 'Well, then, listen what you've got to do,' she commanded in her briskest and most capable voice. 'We must hurry back now to have tea with a friend who is expecting us, and though of course you can't come in, as you haven't been invited, you must come with us and wait outside, or you won't know where to find us again. We shan't stay more than half an hour, and after that we'll take you to your new home. And now you had better walk a little way behind us.'

It's not that we don't like walking with you, but it might lead to awkward questions if people met you with us,' she added hastily, for fear of hurting his feelings.

She need not have been afraid. He had no special desire to walk with these strange children, who had so unexpectedly adopted him, so he fell back in stolid indifference.

'Emmeline,' said Kitty uneasily, as they hurried along towards Mary's house, 'it will be a tremendous surprise for Aunt Grace when Diamond Jubilee turns up.'

'It's the jolliest lark that ever was!' Micky was exclaiming, on her other side, 'I never thought you were so sporting, Emmeline.'

'It isn't sporting at all,' said Emmeline, with dignity. 'You don't seem to understand, Micky, that this is a good work, and not a game.'

'But are you *quite sure* that Aunt Grace won't be cross?' asked Kitty.

'Aunt Grace won't have anything to do with him,' said Emmeline, rather defiantly. 'It's we who are adopting him, not her. Nobody else will know anything about him, not even Mary. I'd like to tell her, but I'm afraid it wouldn't be safe. She might think it her duty to tell Aunt Grace—one never quite knows with grown-up people, even the nicest of them.'

'But how are you going to manage about his

food and the nice house to live in, if nobody's to know about him?' was Kitty's very natural question.

'He'll live in the Feudal Castle, and we'll buy his food with the money in my extra money-box,' said Emmeline. 'It'll be quite all right to use it in that way, for it was for poor little children such as Diamond Jubilee that we collected it.'

For about five seconds the twins gazed at her open-mouthed. Such a scheme was beyond their most brilliant imaginings. Then Micky startled the passers-by with a wild war-whoop, and Kitty gasped: 'How perfectly bea-u-tiful! Why, it'll be just like the Young Pretender—taking him food, I mean, and keeping his hiding-place secret from everybody.'

'We'll have to bind ourselves by a solemn oath of secrecy,' cried Micky. 'Here goes—if I let out about Diamond Jubilee, may I and my descendants——'

'Micky, you know Aunt Grace said we weren't to say that,' said Kitty, in a voice of distress.

'No, Micky; it's not nice,' said Emmeline.

'I was only going to say, "May we lose our shirt-studs even to the hundredth generation!"' said Micky, calmly. 'Aunt Grace invented that herself, so there!'

## CHAPTER VII

### TRIALS OF PHILANTHROPY

‘WELL, Miss Emmeline, dear, you know best what Miss Bolton would like, so I won’t try to over-persuade you, though I’m real sorry you can’t stay just till the 5.25.’ Poor Mary could not understand what had come over her guests. All through that delicious tea of shrimps and strawberry jam, which she had especially provided for the occasion, they had seemed curiously restless and excited, and now here was Emmeline actually insisting on returning by the earlier of the two trains she had mentioned.

‘I’m afraid Aunt Grace—I mean, I think it would make us rather too late getting home,’ said Emmeline, rather confusedly, as she kicked Micky and Kitty under the table by way of a hint to them to hold their tongues. Perhaps on an ordinary occasion the twins might not have taken the hint so submissively, but at that moment they were too eager to see what was going to happen next to mind either being kicked or being hurried away from Mary’s house.



‘Then, if you really think so, I’m afraid it’s about time you were starting,’ said Mary regretfully; ‘George will be sadly disappointed not to see you again, but that can’t be helped.’

‘You must give him our best respects,’ said Kitty—(George always sent his best respects to them, so Kitty supposed it was the correct form of message)—‘and here’s some toffee for him—at least, it’s called candy, though it really is toffee. It has got a little crumbly and pockety, but perhaps he’ll excuse that, and it may comfort him. Toffee’s a wonderful comfort sometimes.’

‘Oh, Miss Kitty, George wouldn’t think of taking your toffee, bless your heart!’ said Mary, kissing the child, as she helped her on with her hat; ‘but I’ll tell him you wanted to give it him, and that will comfort him.’

‘I should have thought myself it would only have disappointed him more,’ said Kitty; ‘but you know best, of course.’

‘Well, we must really be starting,’ said Emmeline, in a nervous fever. She was terribly afraid that Diamond Jubilee might have grown tired of waiting outside, and have run away.

Mary hobbled with them as far as the door ‘It has been just lovely having you,’ she remarked, as she opened it to let them out. ‘I only wish, though, I could have come to the

station to see you off'—a wish which, under the circumstances, they could hardly echo.

For Diamond Jubilee was still faithfully waiting for them a few yards farther down the street. At the moment they came out he was contentedly munching a banana. If Emmeline's acquaintance with him had been more intimate she might have suspected that it had been stolen from the fruit-store at the corner; as it was, this did not strike her, and her pleasure at seeing him still there, and so happily employed, was only spoilt by the fear lest, by too eager a greeting, he should betray them to Mary, who stood at the door affectionately watching them down the street. She need not have been afraid, however. A cool 'Hello!' which if Mary heard, she simply took for the casual salutation of a free-and-easy little stranger, was the only notice he vouchsafed them.

'Walk a good way behind us,' she managed to whisper as she passed him, and to her great relief he obeyed readily enough.

Another moment, and, with last waves of the hand to Mary, they had turned the corner. Emmeline breathed freely again, though she still thought it wise to walk a little in front of their adopted son, just in case they met any of their acquaintance.

On the way to the station Emmeline explained her plans to Micky and Kitty. 'I've still got six-

pence halfpenny left of my Fair money,' she said 'and I should think that would be enough to buy Diamond Jubilee a half-ticket to Chudstone.'

'But Woodsleigh is our station,' said Micky.

'Well, we are going to get out at Chudstone this afternoon,' said Emmeline; 'for one thing, the half-ticket to Woodsleigh would cost a penny more than I've got, and for another thing, it wouldn't be safe to take Diamond Jubilee through the village, where everybody knows us, and they would be sure to talk. Besides, our way home from Chudstone will lie through the wood, so we shall be able to take him to the Feudal Castle without going out of our way hardly at all. Of course, it will take us about a quarter of an hour longer than if we had come from Woodsleigh Station, but I chose the earlier train on purpose to allow for that.'

'You *are* clever, Emmeline!' exclaimed Kitty. 'I should never have thought of all that.'

'I'm four years older than you are, you see,' said Emmeline modestly, though she was flattered by the compliment. 'I think,' she continued, 'that it will be better if Diamond Jubilee travels in a separate compartment.'

'Won't he think it rather horrid of us?' said Micky.

'I don't see why he should mind it any more than he does walking behind us now,' said Emme-

line, 'and I'm sure it will be safer not to seem to belong to him. You never know whom you may meet in the train.'

We know that the best laid schemes both of mice and men are apt to go wrong, but on this occasion Emmeline's really seemed as though they were going to be the exception to prove the rule. The party arrived at the station without any adventures; Diamond Jubilee's ticket cost only five-pence halfpenny; without any difficulty she found an empty compartment for him, and an almost empty one next door to it for herself and the twins; last, but not least, they met no acquaintances at the station, so that although one or two porters stared at seeing Emmeline's interest in such a dirty, ragged, and altogether disreputable little street-arab as Diamond Jubilee, nobody ventured to ask any awkward questions.

It was with a piece of stupidity on Diamond Jubilee's part that the tide of luck seemed to turn. Emmeline had done her best to impress on him that he must get out of the train as soon as he heard the porters shouting 'Chudstone,' but, in spite of her instructions, he as nearly as possible let himself be carried on. She had not meant to appear to have anything to do with him at Chudstone, where they were quite likely to be recognised, but in desperation she was obliged to tell the porter that there was a little boy in the next

carriage who wanted to get out. On the whole, she thought that course better than to open the door herself and bid him get out.

The man's look of suspicion, when he opened the door and saw Diamond Jubilee calmly staring out of the opposite window, was only too obvious.

'Where's your ticket?' he demanded sharply.

The fact that Diamond Jubilee happened to have mislaid it did not mend matters. The porter became abusive, and Emmeline was at her wits' end what to do, between her fear lest, if she stayed to see the end of the fray, her connection with Diamond Jubilee might be suspected, and her conviction that if she left the station without him the chances were that she should lose sight of him altogether.

Luckily, the ticket was discovered underneath the cushion before Emmeline was obliged to come to the rescue, and with an angry injunction from the porter to 'get out, and not give no more trouble,' Diamond Jubilee was allowed to go free.

'Really, I do think you might have managed better,' Emmeline could not help telling him impatiently when they were safe outside the station. 'Now, whatever you do, keep well behind us till we are out of the village.'

'I'm afraid he's going to turn out a duffer,' remarked Micky, as Diamond Jubilee obediently fell back.



‘Micky, you mustn’t talk like that,’ said Emmeline, the more severely because at the bottom of her heart she could not help fearing that there might be some truth in what he said.

It was fortunate that they had not much of the village to go through before they branched off into the blackberry-grown byway which led to the wood, for, as it was, Diamond Jubilee’s appearance attracted a rather disagreeable amount of staring. No one molested him, however, or seemed to connect him with the well-dressed children who were walking some ten yards in front of him, and the party were soon safe in the wood, out of reach of curious eyes and whispering tongues.

‘You’ll soon be home now,’ said Emmeline, turning round to give him an encouraging smile.

Diamond Jubilee grinned, well pleased. He had the vaguest idea of what these little gentle-folks’ home would be like, but he hoped there might be another square meal awaiting him there, perhaps even more delicious than the one he had had at the fried-fish shop.

Great was his astonishment when the children, after walking through the wood for miles, as it seemed to him, came to a triumphant pause before a deserted and tumble-down hut.

‘There, Diamond Jubilee,’ said Emmeline in a voice of congratulation, ‘this is to be your own dear little home.’

Diamond Jubilee gazed at the dear little home in speechless surprise for a moment, after which he managed to say feebly :

'Garn! You're kidding me. That ain't never where you live!'

'It isn't where *we* live,' explained Kitty eagerly; 'we live in a stupid house just like everybody else; but it's where *you* are going to live. Oh, you will be jolly!'

'You don't want to think I'm going to live in that there dirty hole all by meself,' said Diamond Jubilee with kindling wrath, 'cos I aren't—not if it's ever so.'

'But we'll be here so much that you won't have time to be lonely—truly you won't,' pleaded Emmeline, no less surprised than dismayed at the turn things were taking. 'Do come inside like a dear, good boy, and you'll see how nice it is.'

'Yes, do come in, Diamond Jubilee,' coaxed Kitty; 'it's just *lovely* inside—you can't think.'

'And what would you do if you were wrecked on a desert island if you make such a fuss now?' said Micky, in his most reasonable voice.

As Diamond Jubilee had not the slightest intention of being wrecked on a desert island, this consideration had little weight with him, and it took a good many more persuasions to induce him to cross the threshold of the Feudal Castle. When at last he was inside he was so far from mol-

lified at the look of it, and of the three-legged chair without a seat, and the table-top, that he burst into a dismal wail.

‘I won’t stay here—I won’t!’ he sobbed. ‘You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, that you do, for taking me in so shameful.’

Emmeline had to wink her eyes hard to keep back the tears; it was all turning out so utterly unlike what she had expected. ‘You’re a very foolish, ungrateful boy!’ she exclaimed. ‘I’m sure this must be at least as comfortable as Mother Grimes’s house, and you ought to be only too thankful to be where nobody will beat you, and you’ll have plenty to eat.’

‘There was two beds at Sally Grimes’s,’ said Diamond Jubilee, resentfully, ‘and there was three or four on us slept in each, which was company-like, and kept us warm.’

Poor Emmeline! She had heard of those crowded beds before, always with a shudder of horror, and now here was her thankless protégé actually regretting them! ‘Look here, Diamond Jubilee,’ she said, ‘if you’ll only be patient we’ll buy you bedclothes, and so on, as soon as ever we get any extra money for birthdays or anything; as it is, you have only to get a little bracken from the wood, and you can make yourself quite a nice Feudal Castle bed. We would gather it for you, only we simply must go home now.’

'Or Aunt Grace will guess there's something up, and we shall get into a horrid row,' put in Micky, a remark which Emmeline thought neither elegant nor suitable. There was no need for an adopted child to know that its adopters were in danger of getting into anything so undignified as a 'row.'

'I aren't going to stop here alone, not if it's ever so,' said Diamond Jubilee, stubbornly.

His three adopters looked at one another in dismay. What was to be done?

Suddenly a bright idea struck Micky.

'Suppose I come back here to-night and sleep with him?' he suggested.

'That's absurd, Micky!' answered Emmeline. She felt terribly worried. 'You would be found out. Both the doors make such a horrible noise when they are unbolted, and you can't possibly go before the house is shut up for the night, because you know Aunt Grace always looks in the last thing before she goes to bed.'

'I could jump out of the schoolroom window, as I did last time I had a naughty morning,' rejoined Micky. 'Naughty mornings' were recognised institutions with him, sad to say.

'But how would you get in again to-morrow morning?' said Emmeline. 'It wouldn't do to wait till the doors were unbolted, because you must be back in bed before anyone is about.'

‘Oh, I shall swarm up the water-pipe, as I did the other day. I shall manage all right’; and his eyes sparkled with the delight of arranging a real adventure.

‘Well, I suppose that’s how it will have to be settled, as Diamond Jubilee is such a great baby,’ said Emmeline reluctantly. ‘Anyhow, we really must go home now, so you will just have to wait here patiently, Diamond Jubilee, till Micky can come back.’

‘Not if I know it,’ said Diamond Jubilee, who as a town-bred boy felt terrors of the gathering dusk in the lonely wood which stirred him to unwonted resolution. ‘You’ll be giving me the slip if I let you out of my sight.’

‘Ladies and gentlemen always keep their word,’ said Emmeline, with much dignity; ‘you needn’t be afraid of Micky’s not coming back.’

‘I’m coming home along of you,’ said Diamond Jubilee firmly; ‘then you can give me something to eat. I’m about ready for it, I can tell you.’

‘You’re *the* most unreasonable boy I ever met,’ said Emmeline, at the end of her patience. ‘You can’t possibly come home with us. Aunt Grace would be most awfully angry. And I think it’s extremely greedy of you to want anything more to eat after what you had at the shop,’

Emmeline herself had had one tea, and was



just going home to another, but that, she felt, was different.

'I aren't never going to stop alone in this here wood,' repeated Diamond Jubilee doggedly.

'I know what!' cried Kitty. 'Let's hide him in the summer-house just for this evening. He'll be quite safe from being found, for no one goes there except us, and he won't be frightened if he can see the lights from the windows. You'll like the summer-house, won't you, Diamond Jubilee?'

'Well, I don't mind trying,' said Diamond Jubilee not ungraciously.

And so it had to be settled, though Emmeline would have felt much easier in her mind if only he would have stayed in the Feudal Castle, half a mile away from Aunt Grace. However, there was clearly no time for further argument; as it was, they would have to put their best feet forward if they were to reach home before it was suspiciously late even for the 5.25 train. Diamond Jubilee was certainly very trying.

Her heart softened to him again when they reached their own garden, and he quite meekly consented to go into hiding in the summer-house. She had been half afraid that he might insist on coming into the house with them in search of something to eat, so it was a great relief that he suddenly became so obedient.

‘Well, how have you enjoyed yourselves?’ was Aunt Grace’s cheerful greeting, as the three children came in on their return from Eastwich Fair.

‘Scrumptiously!’ said Micky; and then he and Kitty went into raptures over the elephants and the motor-cars, and cocoanuts Micky would have hit if only something or other hadn’t always just happened to prevent him.

‘Aunt Grace,’ broke in Emmeline presently, ‘I hope you don’t mind, but Mary had sprained her ankle rather badly, so she couldn’t go to the Fair, and—and I didn’t want to disappoint the others, so as Mary felt sure we should really be all right, we three went alone.’

Aunt Grace looked rather taken aback.

‘Well, it isn’t quite what I should have chosen for you,’ she said, ‘but I’m sure you and Mary settled what you thought was best. You’re a good child to tell me about it so frankly,’ she added kindly.

Emmeline felt a little uncomfortable. She did not doubt that they were quite right in secretly adopting Diamond Jubilee—people were obliged sometimes to keep their good deeds secret from unsympathetic relations—but perhaps she would rather Aunt Grace had not chosen just that moment to praise her for her frankness.

At tea that evening a most unusual thing happened: Emmeline choked!

If it had been Micky or Kitty there would have been nothing at all strange in such a lapse, but that Emmeline should do such a thing—Emmeline, whose perfect table manners had been held up as a model to the twins ever since they could remember—was indeed a matter for surprise.

‘Was it a crumb?’ asked Aunt Grace, with sympathy, when after vigorous pattings from the delighted twins Emmeline had reached the stage of being able to speak once more.

‘I—I don’t think so,’ mumbled Emmeline, with what would have been a blush if her choking fit had not left her too crimson already to turn even a shade more so.

No, it had not been a crumb which had made her choke in her tea, but the shock of seeing a pale, grimy little face pressed close against the window-pane outside. It had only been there for an instant, but the sudden glimpse had almost brought Emmeline’s heart into her mouth. She felt as though she hardly knew how to sit still at table when at any moment Diamond Jubilee might look in again and be seen by Aunt Grace.

Oh dear, there was Micky asking for another piece of bread and jam! However many more was he going to have before she would be free to get up and slip away to warn Diamond Jubilee?

‘Really, Micky, I think as this is your second tea, and you’ll have supper before so very long,

you've had quite enough **already**,' said Aunt Grace to Emmeline's great relief; 'be quick and finish what's on your plate, Kitty, and then we'll say grace.'

As soon as they had risen from table Emmeline hurried from the room, and rushed out into the garden. She found Diamond Jubilee sitting in the summer-house, looking as virtuous as though he had never stirred out of it since they had left him.

'You really *must* be more careful,' she panted. 'It gave me a most awful turn just now to see you looking in at the window.'

'I ain't never left this here shed,' he assured her in a voice of injured virtue.

'Oh, Diamond Jubilee, that's a story, for I saw you!' said Emmeline, shocked; 'but I haven't time to stay and talk about it now, or they will be missing me. Only promise me you won't come out again—you're fairly safe in here, but anyone might see you wandering about the garden. Do you understand?'

'I'm awful hungry,' he grumbled.

'Well, we'll bring you some supper presently if you will promise not to come out again,' said Emmeline. 'Will you give me your word and honour you won't?'

He promised meekly enough, and she flew off again. She had been so quick that she caught

up with the other children as they were going upstairs to the schoolroom for their evening's preparation.

As soon as the door was safely closed she told them what had happened. 'I think he won't do it again after what I said,' she concluded, 'but it gave me a good fright, I can tell you.'

'Suppose,' said Micky, who did not see why Emmeline should be the only one to make exciting, secret expeditions to the summer-house, suppose I was to creep down on tiptoe to the dining-room and get some of that cake for Diamond Jubilee? Jane won't have begun to clear away yet.'

'No, certainly not,' said Emmeline; 'it would be stealing to take Aunt Grace's cake without her leave and give it to Diamond Jubilee.'

Micky's face fell. 'I suppose it would,' he acknowledged; 'I never thought of that.'

'But poor Diamond Jubilee will get so hungry if he doesn't have anything more to eat till you can buy him some food with the extra money-box money,' said Kitty, sadly.

'But he won't have to wait till then; I've promised to take him some supper presently,' said Emmeline. 'Our supper biscuits and milk are our own to do what we like with, and I mean to give him the milk to-night, and save the biscuits for to-morrow morning's breakfast. It's a pity we





IT WAS LOCKED AND BOLTED, TOP AND BOTTOM.



can't save some of the milk too, but Jane would notice if there weren't three empty glasses.'

'I do wish Aunt Grace had let me have that extra piece of bread and jam!' said Micky. 'I'm sure I could have made room for it all right. Do you think Diamond Jubilee will need quite all our supper, Emmeline?'

'I'm sure he will,' said Emmeline, indignantly. 'You're a very selfish boy, Micky, to grudge poor Diamond Jubilee anything you can give him. How would you like to have only three biscuits and three cups of milk for tea and supper and breakfast put together? I count what he had in the shop as dinner.'

Micky hung his head for a moment, then his face suddenly grew bright with a pleasant idea. 'I know!' he cried. 'We'll pour some of the milk into my tooth-glass, and it can be saved for Diamond Jubilee's breakfast. We can hide the tooth-glass somewhere for the night. I wouldn't mind not brushing my teeth, not just for once,' he added hastily, as Emmeline's face began to assume its most elder-sisterly expression.

'It would be for twice, to-night and to-morrow morning,' said Emmeline, severely. 'I'm sometimes afraid you'll grow up into a disgusting person, Micky, for you're always trying to get out of brushing your teeth!'

Micky muttered something about not caring if

he did grow up into a disgusting person, which Emmeline thought it more dignified not to hear. 'Well, get on with your copies,' she ordered, 'else we shan't have done in time for Aunt Grace to read to us.'

Silence settled down on the schoolroom—silence which was broken suddenly by Kitty's voice, raised in its shrill, questioning key.

'Are *we* guileless children?' she asked, abruptly.

'Sh—sh!' said Emmeline, frowning. Her sum was just at its most critical stage. It cancelled out to one-third, and with a sigh of relief Emmeline gave her mind to Kitty's question. 'What made you think of it, Kitty?' she asked.

'Because of what Mary said this morning about the wonderful things guileless children can do. Is that why we are adopting Diamond Jubilee?'

'We are adopting Diamond Jubilee so as to save him from becoming a thief and burglar,' said Emmeline. 'We are going to train him into a good, noble man. I wonder if you two understand what a great, beautiful work it is we have begun to-day!' Emmeline's eyes shone with enthusiasm.

Micky and Kitty looked greatly impressed and elated. 'Poor Diamond Jubilee!' said Kitty, softly. 'I'm so glad we can give him our supper.'

'And I don't mind much,' said Micky, 'and I'll train him first-rate—just you see if I don't!'

## CHAPTER VIII

### DIAMOND JUBILEE'S SUPPER

A TRAY on which were three glasses of cold milk and three biscuits was always placed on the school-room table punctually at eight o'clock, the twins' bedtime. Emmeline, who was allowed to sit up till a quarter to nine, usually let her supper wait on the table till then; to-night, however, she chose to retire with the younger ones.

'She must be tired with the Fair and all the excitement,' thought Aunt Grace, little suspecting all the plotting and planning that was going on at that moment in the schoolroom.

'The question is, how we are to get the milk out to him without either Aunt Grace or the servants hearing us,' Emmeline was saying. 'If we go out at the side-door they'll hear in the kitchen, and if we go out at the front-door Aunt Grace will hear in the drawing-room. I think on the whole the side-door will be the safest, though, for Aunt Grace has such awfully quick ears. But either way it's very risky.'

'I know what!' exclaimed Micky. 'Do you re-



member that American chap who was in a French prison, and who kept his gaolers so amused with his stories that the other people escaped while they weren't looking? Well, that's what Kitty and I will do. We'll go to the kitchen and tell Jane and Cook all the funniest stories we can think of, and while they are laughing, Emmeline, you can creep out on tiptoe with Diamond Jubilee's supper.

Emmeline felt a little doubtful as to whether Micky's stories would prove quite as absorbing as the 'American chap's' had done, but she could not think of a better plan. 'Very well,' she said, 'you go down to the kitchen now, and I'll bring down the supper in a minute or two, when you've had time to get them interested.'

'Now, Master Micky, it's quite time you were going to bed.' Emmeline heard Jane's voice saying, as she crept past the kitchen-door two minutes later. 'We're having our supper, and we don't want you and Miss Kitty bothering here now.'

'But Jane, he's going to tell you *such* a funny story!' pleaded Kitty.

'It's high time he was dreaming funny dreams instead of telling funny stories,' said Jane severely. 'Go to bed' now, Master Micky, there's a good boy.'

'You'll have to turn me out of the room then,' said Micky—a remark which was promptly fol-

lowed by sounds of a rush and scramble. Emmeline knew that Micky was being chased round and round the kitchen-table—a process which involved far more noise than any amount of funny stories. Decidedly Micky was a person of resource.

Emmeline put down her tray cautiously and stretched out her hand to the door-handle. Horrors! The wretched door would not open, however much she turned the handle. It was locked, and bolted top and bottom!

Emmeline was in despair. She would have to fetch a chair in order to reach the top bolt, and it was hopeless to think of doing this, unlocking and unbolting the door, running out to Diamond Jubilee and making him gulp down the milk, coming back with the tray and the empty glasses, rebolting and relocking the door, and taking away the chair, all in the space of time that Micky was being chased round the kitchen-table! No, clearly there was nothing for it but just to go upstairs again.

It was lucky that she decided as she did, for she and her tray had barely disappeared up the back stairs when the kitchen-door was flung open and a very red-faced Micky was pushed out into the passage.

‘I’ll tell your aunt of you if you don’t go upstairs this minute!’ Jane’s parting shot made the little boy retreat.

'Why, Emmeline, you *have* been quick!' he exclaimed, when he came back into the school-room and found her there. 'Oh, I see'—in a disappointed voice, as he caught sight of the glasses still full of milk—'you haven't even started.'

'Yes, I have,' and she ruefully explained what had happened. 'I can't think what made Jane take it into her head to lock up so early just this one evening,' she concluded. 'She hardly ever does it before they go to bed.'

'She has put the shutters up in the dining-room, too,' remarked Micky. 'I went in there just now because I thought we might manage to open the dining-room window and get the things out that way.'

'I don't think we could have opened that window anyhow; it's so very stiff and heavy,' said Emmeline; 'and, of course, if the shutters are up it's no good thinking of it. Really, Jane is very tiresome.'

'She's the annoyingest person I know,' declared Kitty in an aggrieved voice. 'Micky was telling her the loveliest story, and she wouldn't listen—not one little bit. It was awfully stupid of her—wasn't it, Emmeline?—besides being so unpolite.'

Emmeline was too much worried over the question of Diamond Jubilee's supper to give much thought to Jane's lack of manners.

'What *are* we to do?' she asked in despair.

‘It’s not only that he’ll be so hungry, but it ’ll be breaking a promise if we don’t take him some supper.’

‘I’ll jump out of this window, and then you can throw out the glasses for me to catch, like the man at the circus,’ suggested Micky.

‘I dare say! And the glasses would all get broken and the milk spilt,’ said Emmeline, dismissing the idea with scorn. ‘But we might throw the biscuits out like that. That’s what we’ll have to do, I suppose, though it’s a great pity, as we can’t save the milk for his breakfast.’

‘I’ve thought of a plan!’ cried Kitty suddenly; and off she rushed, returning a moment later with an empty hot-water can.

‘Whatever is the use of that?’ asked Emmeline, quite puzzled.

‘It’ll be the lift for the glasses to go down in,’ explained Kitty, who was busy untying her sash. ‘My sash will be like the rope to let it down with.’

The story games at which they were constantly playing had made them all very clever at putting things to other uses than those for which they were naturally intended, so both Micky and Emmeline understood directly what Kitty meant.

‘It’s a splendid idea!’ said Emmeline warmly.

Kitty flushed with pleasure as she bent down, and began tying one end of her sash in a knot round the spout of the hot-water can.

'You'd better let me do that,' said Micky eagerly; 'girls always make grannies.' Sailor knots were a new and carefully acquired accomplishment to Micky himself, so it was with much satisfaction that he undid Kitty's rather feeble attempt, and bound her sash with two beautiful knots, one on the spout and the other on the handle of the hot-water can. 'There! That'll do champion!' he pronounced as he finished.

The next business was to put two of the glasses and one of the biscuits into the hot-water can. It had struck Emmeline while Micky was tying his knots that they could, after all, save the contents of the third glass for to-morrow morning's breakfast, since she and Kitty could use the same tooth-glass just for once. That being so, one of the biscuits might well be spared for to-night's supper.

As soon as the water-can lift was ready packed, Micky clambered up on to the schoolroom window-sill and jumped out, landing right on the top of Mr. Brown's favourite double chrysanthemum. The poor plant did not like it at all, but nobody paid any attention to it. Conspirators cannot be expected to trouble about such trifles as chrysanthemums, even if they *are* intended for flower-shows.

Afterwards the can was slowly and carefully lowered by Emmeline. Micky lifted up the lid



as soon as he had it safely in his hands, and all three children were delighted when it turned out that neither of the glasses had been upset during their descent, and only a little of the milk spilt.

'I shall jump out, too, and help Micky take Diamond Jubilee his supper,' announced Kitty, suddenly; and she was just preparing to do so when Emmeline caught hold of her sleeve to stop her, thereby letting drop the sash, which was her only connecting-link with the can.

'There now!' she cried angrily. 'See what you've made me do by being so silly! It'll all be found out now, for I don't know however we are to get the can up again.'

'I'm so dreadfully sorry, Emmeline,' said poor Kitty in a piteous voice.

She felt, as she told Micky afterwards, 'a mixture of a donkey and a traitor,' and that is not a cheery feeling.

Micky set the can down on the ground and rubbed his head thoughtfully. He always did this when he was perplexed, not because it helped him, but because he had an impression that it was the correct thing to do. Suddenly he bounded like an excited indiarubber ball.

'I've got it!' he cried. 'What donkeys we are! All I'll have to do is to untie the knots, and roll the sash into a little ball to throw up to

you ; then you'll have to let the two ends down, and I'll tie the knots again, and you'll be able to draw up the can as easy as easy. Do you see ?'

'Oh yes!' said Emmeline in a tone of great relief; 'you are a good boy, Micky, to have thought of that. But make haste now and take Diamond Jubilee his supper ; someone may come in any moment. I'm sorry I was cross, Kitty,' she added, as Micky flitted across the lawn at a speed which was risky considering that he was carrying two tumblers of milk, and disappeared among the dark bushes round the summer-house, 'but it was silly of you to think of jumping down. However would you have got back again ? *You* couldn't have swarmed up the water-pipe.'

'I would have been able to if you hadn't stopped me practising the other day,' said Kitty, rather resentfully. It was her one grievance that she was not always allowed to follow Micky in his gymnastic feats. 'When I'm grown up,' she added, 'I mean to have six daughters, and all the lessons they shall do will be learning to swarm up water-pipes !'

'Hark ! I do believe that's someone coming !' said Emmeline, looking frightened.

Footsteps were certainly mounting the back-stairs. Nearer and nearer they came, and Emmeline's heart began to thump so hard that she could

almost hear it. What if it should be Aunt Grace herself?

The footsteps passed by the school-room door without pausing, and Emmeline gave a gasp of relief. If only Micky would make haste and come back before someone really did come in!

'You'd better go and undress, Kitty,' she said nervously. 'I must wait here to take in the can, but there's no need for you to stay, and if Aunt Grace or Jane come in and find you still here they will want to know why.'

It is hard to be ordered off to bed when one is in the middle of such an exciting thing as a plot, and poor Kitty looked so much disappointed that Emmeline had to comfort her by telling her to fetch her own tooth-glass to be filled with milk and hidden for the night in the school-room cupboard. That cheered her up again, and she went off to bed contentedly enough afterwards.

Before she had been gone more than a minute Micky and his empty tumblers returned.

'Diamond Jubilee's a greedy pig,' he said, as he began fumbling with the knots.

'People shouldn't talk like that of their adopted children,' said Emmeline, 'and do, do make haste!'

'Well, but he is,' persisted Micky; 'and I say, Emmeline, I can't undo these knots.'

'Oh, Micky, you *must* be able to undo your

own knots!' exclaimed Emmeline, almost in tears.

'Well, I can't, then,' said Micky, after a few more desperate tugs, 'and what's more, it's getting so dark I can hardly see.'

'What is to be done?' cried poor Emmeline.

'P'raps you could catch hold of the sash if I toss up the middle,' suggested Micky. They tried, but of course in vain. 'Well, I'll just have to wind it round my neck and swarm up with it,' said Micky, and Emmeline saw that there was nothing else for it, though she felt very uneasy as to the fate of the tumblers.

Her fears were only too well justified. Micky found swarming up the water-pipe a far more difficult feat in the twilight, and with a heavy can almost throttling him, than it had been in broad daylight without a can. Several times he tried, and only slipped back panting to the ground.

'I can't do it with that beastly can,' he declared at last. 'I'll have to leave it behind a bush just for to-night.'

'But, Micky, Jane will come in and wonder where the glasses are,' said Emmeline in despair, 'and then it will all be found out. Oh dear! what *shall* we do?'

'Oh, I'll put the glasses in my trouser pockets,' said Micky cheerfully; 'I think there'll be room if I turn out all the string and stuff.'

It took a minute or two for Micky to turn out all the 'string and stuff'—under which designation he included such various articles as a broken pocket-knife, a half-eaten apple, odds and ends of sealing-wax, a piece of very messy toffee, marbles, old postage stamps, and crumbs of yet older biscuits—and a minute or two more to hide this and the can under a bush, and when at last he and the glasses had begun their journey up the water-pipe, it was not as prosperous as might have been wished. It is true that Micky, red, panting, and very dirty, did finally reach the school-room window-sill in safety, but this was not until after various adventures, in the course of which one of the tumblers was smashed to pieces, and the other rather badly cracked.

'Oh dear, I wish we had never tried to get the milk out to Diamond Jubilee!' sighed Emmeline, 'if we had just taken him the biscuits it would have been keeping my promise, but I did so want to make a good impression this first evening!'

'You haven't made it, anyhow,' said Micky, 'he said he was still hungry even after he'd drunk the two glasses of milk!'

'You're sure you took him the *two* glasses?' asked Emmeline, with sudden suspicion. 'You didn't drink some of it on the way, did you, Micky?'

'Of course I didn't,' said Micky; 'gentlemen never drink their guest's—I mean their adopted



children's—milk, and, besides, I don't like milk much. But I'm going to have a biscuit, anyhow.'

'But, Micky, it's just as bad for a gentleman to eat his adopted child's biscuit as to drink his milk,' said Emmeline.

'No, it's not; not when the gentleman's been swarming up water-pipes till he's as hungry as hungry,' said Micky. 'I tell you what, Emmeline, if you'll let me have the other two biscuits, I'll go and tell Aunt Grace I'm very sorry I've had an accident and broken two of the glasses. Then there won't be any questions asked. Aunt Grace is much too jolly to bother you with questions when you go and tell of yourself.'

'It doesn't seem quite truthful, somehow,' said Emmeline. 'She'll think you've been dropping the glasses on the floor or something like that.'

'Well, I shan't *say* so,' said Micky stoutly, 'and I did have an accident—several accidents.'

'I suppose it's all right,' said Emmeline, still rather doubtfully; 'and if you must have the biscuits, you must, but it's rather horrid of you, Micky.'

'No, it's not horrid, it's only hungry of me,' said Micky, calmly helping himself to a biscuit; 'you must remember I've got a long night before me.'

Micky did not have to go downstairs to make his confession to Aunt Grace, for she appeared in

the schoolroom while he was in the middle of his second biscuit.

‘Why, Micky, you seem to be having a very lengthy supper to-night,’ she remarked, in her brisk, pleasant voice. ‘Do you know half-past eight has struck? And what *has* been happening to the glasses?’ she added, coming to the table and examining them.

‘I’ve had—several accidents,’ stammered Micky, turning red.

‘So it seems,’ said Aunt Grace rather dryly. ‘Is it the accidents which have taken you so long?’

‘Partly,’ said Micky, turning still redder, and looking so very uncomfortable that kind Aunt Grace took pity on him.

‘Well, we won’t say any more about it this once,’ she promised good-naturedly; ‘luckily, the glasses are only the common sort. But I’m afraid the next that gets broken you’ll have to pay for out of your pocket-money unless there’s some extra good reason for the accident. Do you see, old man? And now make haste and go to bed, for it’s shockingly late.’

‘Aunt Grace,’ cried Micky, flinging himself upon her and giving her one of his bear’s hugs, ‘you’re a—a ripper!’—a compliment which gratified Aunt Grace as much as any she had ever received.

Emmeline watched them with her curious aloofness. ‘Pretty people like Aunt Grace can get

round everybody,' she was thinking bitterly 'Even the twins are beginning to love her more than me!'

'Good-night, Emmeline,' said Aunt Grace, looking at her niece rather wistfully. She would have given a great deal for Emmeline to have hugged her as Micky had just done.

'Good-night,' said Emmeline, in a voice which sounded sulky, but was really unhappy, for jealousy is the most miserable feeling that anyone can have, except perhaps sea-sickness.

When Emmeline went to her room she found Kitty already in bed. Her eyes were shining with excitement. 'Has Micky got back safe, and did Diamond Jubilee like his supper?' she asked eagerly.

'I don't know—I don't think he said,' answered Emmeline, absently.

'Do you know,' continued Kitty, 'I feel as if I'd had ten birthdays all in a lump to-day, and was a big grown-up woman of eighteen; for adopting somebody is an awfully grown-up thing to do, isn't it, Emmeline?'

'Yes,' assented Emmeline, with a brightening face.

There was one person, at all events, who could never forsake her for Aunt Grace; Diamond Jubilee, at least, would never forget the one who had rescued him from a life of sin and misery.

Under her gentle guidance he would grow into a very, very good man—perhaps even a clergyman or a missionary. Some day he would address a meeting like the one the other night, only much larger, and he would tell the story of his own life. ‘But for that child who rescued me when I was a ragged little boy, being brought up as a pick-pocket, I might ere this have ended my life on the gallows,’ he would say, in a voice which would tremble with emotion. Emmeline could not quite make up her mind whether she herself would be present at this interesting meeting, or whether she would by that time be lying in a quiet grave, covered with the wreaths of white lilies which Diamond Jubilee would order, regardless of expense. On the whole she inclined to the latter alternative.

That night, as Aunt Grace brushed her hair, she was thinking of the twins, and what dear, merry little souls they were. ‘And Emmeline’s a splendid little person, too,’ she told herself loyally; she was always afraid of making a distinction, even in thought, between her love for the twins and her love for Emmeline. ‘How few children of her age could be safely trusted to take a younger brother and sister to a fair! It was odd of Mary to let them go, but I suppose it was out of her great good-nature and fear of disappointing them, and, after all, I suppose in her own circle it

would seem quite a suitable arrangement that a little elder sister should take the younger ones. Well, anyhow, no harm has come of it.'

Perhaps Aunt Grace would have been less sure that no harm had come of it if she could have guessed that at that very moment Micky had jumped out of the schoolroom window, preparatory to spending the night with the disreputable little ragamuffin whom Emmeline had picked up at the fair.

'Are you all right, Micky?' Emmeline was asking anxiously. 'Are you ready to have the blankets thrown out?'

The idea of taking the blankets from the unused spare-room bed had been a really brilliant inspiration.

'Right as a trivet,' said Micky, in a voice which, though cheery, was prudently subdued; 'the bed's so jolly soft. Yes, throw them out now. Well, if this isn't the greatest lark!'

The moon was very bright, so that Emmeline and Kitty were able to watch the tangle of blankets and boy tottering across the lawn. Then it disappeared among the dark bushes, and the two girls crept back to their beds as quietly as they had left them.



## CHAPTER IX

### BAD NEWS

EMMELINE awoke next morning with the cares of the mother of a family weighing on her mind. Yesterday, amid the excitement of adopting Diamond Jubilee and of the various adventures which had followed, she had hardly had leisure to realise all the difficulties and anxieties the carrying out of her plan would involve; but now that the first flush of romance was beginning to fade into the light of common day, they stood out with unpleasant clearness. What if Diamond Jubilee should go on refusing to live alone in the Feudal Castle? For one evening he might be fairly safe from discovery in the summer-house; for one night Micky might go out and sleep in the wood without anyone becoming aware of his absence; but Emmeline had sense enough to see that such arrangements could not possibly be lasting. Even for once they were very risky. Suppose Micky should fail to come back before Jane went to call him?

She felt under her pillow for her little gold

watch. It was a quarter to seven; in another half-hour it would be time to get up, and Jane would come to call them. What a hue and cry would be raised if Micky were missing!

A restless feeling seized her that she must get up then and there and go to see whether he was safe in his bed; so she scrambled into her dressing-gown and slippers, and hurried out of the room and down the passage and steps which led to the old part of the house. Her knees shook as she opened Micky's door and crept in. Suppose the bed should be empty?

Joy! Micky was lying there, so sound asleep that she could almost have believed the adventures of the night before only a dream, had it not been for the mud on his house-shoes, which were lying in the middle of the floor mixed up with a heap of his other clothes, all evidently left just as he had got out of them on his return.

'It must have been raining in the night, for there was no mud yesterday evening,' thought Emmeline, as she folded the clothes and put them neatly on a chair, under which she placed the shoes. She was a tidy child by nature, and besides, as she reflected, Jane was much less likely to notice that the shoes were muddy, if they were in the right place.

She went back to her own room feeling much easier in her mind. For that time, at all events,

the danger was over, and surely the very fact that Micky was lying there so peacefully gave good hope that it would not again be necessary to run such a risk. Micky could never have gone to sleep so calmly if Diamond Jubilee had been in a great state of distress at being left alone in the Feudal Castle. So, at least, Emmeline told herself and tried to believe.

Several times, while the little girls were dressing, and while Kitty, who had all the delight of being in a plot without the anxieties of responsibility, was pouring out a constant stream of excited chatter, Emmeline looked nervously out of the window, half expecting to see Diamond Jubilee lurking somewhere about the garden. There was never any sign of him, however, and her spirits rose higher each moment. If only he were settling down to live happily in the Feudal Castle, everything would be more simple!

‘I can’t think what can have happened to Micky,’ remarked Aunt Grace, as they were beginning breakfast that morning without his having made an appearance; ‘it’s not often he oversleeps himself. I’m afraid the Fair has been too much for you young people,’ she added, in a playfully teasing voice, as Kitty gave a great yawn.

‘Oh, it’s not that,’ began Kitty, eager to defend the Fair; ‘I think it’s——’ Here she became

suddenly aware of Emmeline's frowns, and broke off with reddening cheeks. What a scolding she would have from Emmeline presently !

Fortunately for Kitty, Aunt Grace was not attending. She was reading a letter which seemed to contain bad news, for her expression grew more and more distressed. She read it over twice, as though hoping against hope that she might have made some mistake, and when she laid it down Emmeline saw that her hands were shaking.

'I've just had a piece of very bad news,' she said quietly. 'Mary King—the very dear friend I used to live with in London—is dangerously ill—dying, I'm afraid. I shall have to go to her to-day or—— Kitty, would you mind fetching Bradshaw? It's on the drawing-room writing-table.'

Kitty bustled off, awestruck and yet pleased with the importance of being able to help at such a crisis, if only by fetching Bradshaw.

'Oh dear, it's last month's—I was forgetting,' said Aunt Grace wearily, as Kitty came running back with it. 'I suppose it wouldn't be safe to trust to it—so many trains change in September.'

'Suppose I go out and buy another?' suggested Kitty, eagerly. To be sent out shopping in the middle of breakfast would be a delightful break in the ordinary routine of life.

'You wouldn't get one at any of the village shops,' said Aunt Grace, putting her hand to her forehead. 'Stay! the Robinsons might possibly have one.'

'I'll run round to the Vicarage and ask them,' broke in Kitty, rushing off almost before Aunt Grace had time for the absent 'Very well,' which was all she answered.

'I'll just go and see that she puts on a hat,' murmured Emmeline, more to herself than to Aunt Grace who had no ears for such things just then. The precaution proved a necessary one. Emmeline was only just in time to stop Kitty from running out at the front door hatless, gloveless, and still in her morning pinafore, a garment which had seen much active service in the course of its career.

Micky was coming downstairs by way of the banisters when Emmeline made her way back to the dining-room. 'I say, is Aunt Grace in a wax?' he inquired.

'What about?' asked Emmeline. 'Oh, because of your being late for breakfast? No, I expect she has forgotten all about you. She's just heard that her dearest friend is dying.'

Micky's round, impudent face suddenly fell, and he was so much awestruck that he had got to the dining-room door before it occurred to him to make any remark.



When the two children came into the room Aunt Grace was sitting very still, gazing straight in front of her, with eyes that did not seem to be seeing anything. Without saying a word Micky went straight up to her and gave her a rough hug.

‘My own boy!’ she murmured, a little absently, but very tenderly, as she stroked his ruffled head—Micky’s toilet that morning had left much to be desired—and seemed to find a certain comfort in the touch. Emmeline suddenly felt a queer lump rising in her throat. Kitty could run messages for Aunt Grace, and Micky could comfort her; she alone could do nothing.

‘Won’t you try and eat something, Aunt Grace?’ she suggested, shyly, after a moment. ‘Let me butter some toast for you.’

‘Thank you, Emmeline,’ said Aunt Grace, gratefully; and though she had no appetite for food just then, she made a brave effort to eat the toast so as not to disappoint the child, and the little kindness given and received brought them nearer together than ever before.

‘I didn’t know Miss King was ill, even,’ Emmeline ventured, timidly. ‘It’s very sudden, isn’t it?’

‘In a sense, yes,’ said Aunt Grace sadly; ‘but she has known, and I have known for a long time past, that she had this disease, and that the end might come at any time. That was why I went

on living with her in London till her sister could return from India, instead of coming at once to look after you, as I should naturally have done. She would have let me go, poor darling, for she never thought of herself. But I just couldn't leave her alone, knowing that all this suffering and danger might come on at any time.'

It was the first time that Aunt Grace had talked to Emmeline so much as she would have done to a grown-up person, and the little girl listened with a strange mixture of feelings, among which gratification, perplexity, and self-reproach came uppermost. She had hitherto always taken for granted that Aunt Grace had stayed in London because she was absorbed in a round of gaiety, and now that the real reason appeared to have been such a very different one, she found her whole point of view shifting in a disconcerting fashion. Could it be that Aunt Grace was really a quite different kind of person from what Emmeline had always imagined her?

There was little time for considering the question, for just at that moment Alice came in with a telegram. 'It's just as I feared from the letter,' said Aunt Grace, after she had torn it open with trembling fingers. 'All the worst symptoms are confirmed. I shall have to start by the next train,' and with that she hurried away to pack and to give a few hasty directions to the servants.

'Can't I help you, Aunt Grace?' asked Emmeline, running after her.

'Well, will you look after Micky's breakfast, and Kitty's too, when she comes back?' said Aunt Grace, with a faint smile. 'That will help me more than anything.'

Sympathy had by no means dulled the edge of Micky's appetite, and he was still in the middle of a leisurely breakfast when Kitty burst in, followed rather more quietly by Mr. Faulkner. 'Aunt Grace—where's Aunt Grace?' she demanded, breathlessly.

'I'm going to London to-day myself, so I want your aunt to let me travel with her and help her all I can,' explained Mr. Faulkner to Emmeline, as Kitty ran away to look for Aunt Grace.

'Thank you; I'm sure she'll be very glad,' said Emmeline, in her best grown-up manner. 'Won't you sit down and let me pour you out a cup of tea?'

'Thanks very much, but I've had breakfast already,' said Mr. Faulkner; and just at that moment Aunt Grace herself came in, with Kitty.

Mr. Faulkner did not wait to say 'How do you do?' Instead, he began at once: 'You'll let me travel with you, won't you?' not at all as if he was proposing a kindness, but in the way people ask for something they want very much.

'Thank you! I shall be very glad,' said Aunt

Grace, and for one moment she smiled—smiled more with her eyes than with her lips, even though her eyes were full of tears. Emmeline felt in a vague, wondering way that Mr. Faulkner's suggestion had comforted Aunt Grace more than her toast, or Kitty's eagerness in running messages, or even Micky's hug. It was odd, she thought, for Aunt Grace did not seem a person who would mind travelling alone.

He went away again almost directly afterwards, and there followed a time of general bustle and confusion. 'It's a pity we can't take Diamond Jubilee his breakfast now,' remarked Emmeline, chancing to find herself alone with the twins. 'It would be quite easy to get it out of the house without anyone noticing while they're all so busy; but it's such a long way to the Feudal Castle that I'm afraid it would be lesson-time before we could get back.'

'Oh, but he isn't at the Feudal Castle,' said Micky calmly. 'I believe he'd be in the summer-house still if I hadn't told him he must jolly well get out if he didn't want me to lick him. I expect he's hanging about somewhere near the garden.'

'Micky, you surely didn't sleep in the summer-house?' asked Emmeline, in a frightened voice.

Micky nodded.

'You couldn't expect us to lug those beastly

blankets all the way to the Feudal Castle, he said.

‘But, Micky, it was really risky,’ said Emmeline. ‘Just supposing Mr. Brown had found you!’

‘Well, he didn’t, anyhow,’ said Micky, ‘and it wasn’t likely he would; nobody hardly ever goes there except us. It was really much safer than if we had gone to the Feudal Castle. How would I ever have known when it was time to come back, in the middle of the wood?’

There was something in this, but still Emmeline could not help feeling that it had been a risk, and a risk that Diamond Jubilee must not again be allowed to run. Then, as a fresh idea suddenly struck her, ‘What about the blankets?’ she gasped—‘you haven’t surely left them——’

‘Oh, they’re as safe as safe,’ Micky reassured her. ‘I thought of a simply lovely place to keep them—Punch’s kennel!’

‘But they’ll be seen as soon as ever Punch is unchained!’ said Emmeline, in a panic. ‘Oh, how could you be so silly?’

‘It wasn’t silly,’ said Micky. ‘I pushed them right to the back of the kennel, where it’s all dark. Nobody would ever see them unless they stooped down and looked right in, and they’d never think of doing that.’

‘Well, perhaps not,’ said Emmeline doubtfully,



'but I'm afraid they'll be very dirty and smelly when they come out again.'

'Oh, they'll only smell rather doggy,' said Micky cheerfully.

It struck Emmeline that Jane might not take it quite so calmly as Micky, if next time she went to prepare the spare-room for a visitor she found the best blankets smelling doggy. Still, it was to be hoped that next time was still a long way off, and meantime the kennel had one advantage as a storing-place—namely, that it would be possible to take the blankets out of it without being observed. Perhaps, after all, Micky had done the best that could be done under the circumstances. Emmeline felt quite bewildered with the new and unthought of difficulties and problems which were continually cropping up. She had never realised that the secret adoption of a child would prove so complicated a business.

'Well, I think I'll go out with the milk and see if I can find him,' she said aloud, after a moment's anxious reflection. 'Even if I don't I can always leave it in some safe outdoor place. Don't either of you come with me. Aunt Grace may want us to go messages, and it would be awkward if you were out as well.'

Emmeline ran up to the schoolroom, took the glass of milk out of the cupboard, and hurried downstairs with it. When she had got it safely

into the garden without anyone having noticed her, she began to breathe freely again.

Alas! An unforeseen danger was following her down the garden path. She had been thinking so much of escaping with her milk, unseen by Jane, Cook, or Aunt Grace, that she had forgotten all about Mr. Brown till now, when she heard his wheel-barrow grating on the gravel behind her. It was a dismaying sound, for Mr. Brown had inconveniently keen eyes, and if he saw the milk he would certainly wonder what she was doing with it out there. What was worse, he would wonder about it to Jane and Cook, for Mr. Brown's standard of honour in not telling tales was not as high as it might have been. So Emmeline almost ran along the path, without daring so much as to look round, and, pushing open the garden door, fled through it and into the lane so hastily that a good deal of her milk splashed out on to her dress.

'Hello!' called a voice, as she was trying, without much success, to rub out the stain with her pocket-handkerchief. Looking up, startled, she saw Diamond Jubilee's disreputable little figure leaning over the railings which fenced off the wood.

'You should say "Good - morning," not "Hulloa,"' said Emmeline with dignity, as soon as she had recovered from her start. 'See, I

have brought you your breakfast. Drink it quickly, for I have to get back to—to my work.' She had been on the point of saying 'to lessons,' but 'work' sounded more dignified.

'Why, I reckoned you was a lady,' said Diamond Jubilee, pausing between two gulps to give her one of his critical stares.

'Well, so I am,' said Emmeline, perplexed and a little offended.

'Ladies don't do no work,' said the boy.

'Oh yes, they do,' said Emmeline earnestly. 'Everybody that's worth anything does work. Why, even the Prince of Wales has "I serve" for his motto. That's one of the things I'll have to teach you, Diamond Jubilee, that you can't be a real gentleman unless you work for other people.'

'My father were a gentleman more often than not,' remarked Diamond Jubilee, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

It struck Emmeline that she must certainly buy him one or two pocket-handkerchiefs. To be sure, he needed an entire new outfit, for what he had on was only fit for a bonfire, but her present means would, alas! only run to absolute necessities, such as food and pocket-handkerchiefs.

'Well, then, you must try to follow your father's example,' she said aloud. She did not

know that to be 'a gentleman' in Diamond Jubilee's sense meant to be out of work. 'Think how it would have grieved him if he could have seen you yesterday afternoon trying to steal my purse! You must always be a good boy, for his sake.'

Now, as a matter of fact, the late Mr. Jones had frequently varied his periods of being a gentleman with times in prison, for he had combined a strong turn for petty crime with a distinct talent for being found out, so it was no wonder that his son stared at Emmeline in vacant surprise. He was never a boy who troubled himself much to understand puzzling things, however, so he passed on to a subject of more practical importance.

'Aren't you going to give me nothing more to eat?' he demanded, with a return to his professional whine. 'That ain't much of a breakfast, that aren't.'

'Do you know, Diamond Jubilee, I'm afraid you're rather greedy?' said Emmeline. 'You oughtn't to want anything more after that glassful of good milk. I'm sure it's more than what you've been used to having for breakfast.'

'Well, that aren't, then,' said Diamond Jubilee sulkily. 'I'm used to a meat breakfast, I am.'

'I'm afraid that's a story,' said Emmeline, gravely, 'and it's very wicked to tell stories,

besides being silly, for you might know I shouldn't believe anything so absurd.'

Emmeline spoke out of the wisdom she had gained from her little story-books, in which ragged street-urchins were always pictured as breakfasting on dry bread—if, indeed, they had any breakfast at all. But, as a matter of fact, Diamond Jubilee's statement was not altogether without foundation. There had been times in Mother Grimes' establishment when money became mysteriously plentiful, and at such times she and Diamond Jubilee and the other little boys who lived with her, had fared with reckless luxury till the last penny had been spent. To be sure, there had been other times when they had really had almost as little to eat as Emmeline imagined—indeed, they had been passing through one of those uncomfortable intervals just lately, which accounted for Diamond Jubilee's willingness to let himself be adopted—but the memory of that and all the other disagreeables of his former life was fast losing its vividness.

'I did used to have meat breakfasts,' he repeated stubbornly.

'I don't believe you,' said Emmeline, severely. 'But I haven't time to talk about that just now. What I wanted to say was to tell you how vexed I am to hear that you spent last night in the summer-house. Why, just suppose Mr. Brown



had found you there when he came to work this morning! There would have been a dreadful fuss, and you would have been sent back to Mother Grimes!

‘And do you reckon I’d mind that?’ he asked, scornfully. ‘I’d a deal sooner be with her than with you, I can tell you.’

Emmeline took this for mere bravado, but she turned rather white, none the less, and it was with an effort that she recovered herself and said gently: ‘I don’t think you mean that. Anyhow, I hope you’ll try and be a brave boy to-night, and not make a fuss about sleeping in your own little house. It’s true it *is* rather bare just at present, but think how many poor little boys have no house at all to sleep in.’

‘Lor! how she do jaw!’ exclaimed Diamond Jubilee, with a rude laugh.

If Emmeline had been white a minute before, she turned crimson now.

‘You are a very naughty, ungrateful boy!’ she cried, as the tears rushed to her eyes, ‘and I’m not going to waste any more time bothering about you. Give me that glass, please,’ and, having snatched it out of his hands, she ran across the lane into their own garden, feeling more hurt and angry than she had ever done in her life before.

She calmed down a little after she had rushed upstairs to her own room and rinsed out the glass,

and by the time she had dabbed her eyes with a wet sponge and dried them with a towel, she had almost forgiven Diamond Jubilee.

‘After all, it only shows how badly he needs someone to teach him better,’ she told herself, bravely, ‘so I must try to be patient with him, poor boy! But, oh dear, I wonder whether Kathleen ever found those children whom she was an angel to, so trying?’

## CHAPTER X

### OMNIBUS NUTS

'I'M sure people's adopted children matter much more than their stupid French exercises!' wailed Kitty. Her own French exercise had been so very stupid that Miss Miller had sentenced her to stay in after lessons and write it over again; and now Emmeline had announced her intention of going into the village to buy Diamond Jubilee's food-supply. It was really too hard, Kitty felt, to be kept in to-day of all days.

'Leave the old thing,' suggested Micky; 'very likely she'll forget to ask for it to-morrow as she did for my declension.'

'I can't—she put me on my honour,' said Kitty, kicking the table-leg angrily.

'Putting people on their honour is a horridly mean dodge,' growled Micky.

'I wonder whether, when people wanted to go lovely secret expeditions to take food to Prince Charlie, they ever had to do stupid exercises instead?' said Kitty, giving another vicious kick to the table.

At that moment Emmeline entered, in hat and gloves. 'I've taken the extra money-box money,' she told them, breathlessly; 'it's two shillings and ninepence. That ought to last him nearly three weeks. About a shilling a week is all we can reckon on, I'm afraid, though it doesn't seem much even for Omnibus Nuts. To be sure, there's birthday money, but that won't be yet, and even when we get it, it will be wanted for bedclothes and things. If only we could earn some more, somehow!'

'Diamond Jubilee shall have all my egg-money,' said Kitty eagerly. She had a little family of bantams, and was allowed to sell the eggs to the cook.

'But there have been hardly any eggs lately,' said Emmeline.

'There's only one hen now Whitey's dead,' said Kitty, rather injured. 'I'm sure Specky does her best. It's such a pity that last set of eggs Whitey hatched all turned out gentlemen. If only they had been ladies we might have had heaps of eggs.'

'What are Omnibus Nuts, Emmeline?' asked Micky five minutes later, as they were 'ralking' to the village. ('Ralking' was a word of their own used to describe a peculiar cross between walking and running, specially invented by Micky for occasions like coming back from Church, when running was forbidden.)

'Oh, they're a wonderful new food that's just been invented, and that's ever so much cheaper than any of the ordinary foods. A person could manage to live on them for ninepence a week, it says,' explained Emmeline. 'They're called Omnibus Nuts because they contain all the things which are of use in all the other foods we eat. I read all about them in that *Vegetarian Magazine* which came the other day. I think Diamond Jubilee ought really to do quite well if he has nine-pennyworth of Omnibus Nuts every week, and three-pennyworth of chocolate, which everyone says is about the most nourishing thing you can eat.'

'Well, the chocolate will be decent, anyway,' said Micky, with conviction.

A quarter of an hour's 'ralking' brought them into the village.

'Omnibus Nuts?' said Mrs. Freeman, the fat and rather aggressive woman who kept the shop which supplied the Woodsleigh people with the less interesting wants of life—for exciting things like Christmas dinners or new hats they usually went into Eastwich—'no, we don't keep them. What's more, I never heard tell of them.'

Emmeline's face fell. According to the advertisement, all England was munching Omnibus Nuts; it was very tiresome of Woodsleigh to be the one exception.



‘How long would it take you to order them for us?’ she asked anxiously.

‘There’s the carrier coming from Eastwich tomorrow, but you’d not get such things there, I don’t suppose, and it wouldn’t be worth our while to order them special from London, not the little quantity you’d want. I suppose it isn’t Miss Bolton who’s ordering them, by the way?’

‘No, but we shall want a very large quantity,’ said Emmeline, drawing herself up—‘nine-penny-worth every week.’

‘Yes,’ chimed in Micky, ‘we shall want a quite enormous quantity—somebody’s going to live just on Omnibus Nuts and chocolate.’

‘Well I never!’ ejaculated Mrs. Freeman, while Emmeline frowned and pressed Micky’s foot hard.

‘Well, can you order them for us?’ she asked hastily, hoping by a return to more formal business relations to avert suspicions.

‘Well, I don’t know, I’m sure,’ said Mrs. Freeman, eyeing her customers doubtfully. ‘You see, we should have to order them special from London.’

‘I don’t suppose you would,’ said Emmeline, impatiently; ‘you’d be almost sure to get them in Eastwich. Besides, once you’d got them in stock, everybody in the village would be buying them—they’re like meat, and milk, and vegetables.

all put together, it says, and they don't cost hardly anything, and there's no need to cook them.'

Mrs. Freeman looked stolidly incredulous, and Emmeline was fast losing what remained of her temper, when there came an unexpected interruption. A bright-looking youth suddenly poked his head out of the half-open door which divided the shop from an inner room, and joined in the conversation.

'So you want Omnibus Nuts?' he said. 'Wonderful things! I know them well. Pity they're out of stock. Still, a famous specialist has just discovered that monkey-nuts have exactly the same nutritious properties. Wouldn't you like some of them?'

Mrs. Freeman abruptly turned her back on the children, and Emmeline, who could not see her grin, was much impressed by the young man's long words and confident air.

'You're *quite* sure they're as good as Omnibus Nuts?' she asked, with only a slight touch of doubt in her voice. 'They would really do instead of meat and vegetable and all the other things?'

'I've lived on them myself for six weeks together, and felt as chirpy as could be at the end of the time,' said the young man, gravely.

'Well, then, I think they *must* be all right,' decided Emmeline, with a sigh of relief 'so we'll take some, please.'

The last part of Emmeline's sentence was addressed to Mrs. Freeman, but that lady had become suddenly and unaccountably busy with something in a dark corner of the shop, and it was the youth who came forward to serve them.

'What quantity would you like?' he asked, politely.

'Well,' began Emmeline, 'I meant to have spent two-and-threepence on the Omnibus Nuts.'

'You shall have our entire stock of monkey-nuts for two-and-threepence,' said the young man, promptly. 'It comes cheaper buying them in large quantities, you know; but, of course, we can sell you a smaller amount if you prefer.'

'Oh, I think we'll take them all. I know it comes cheaper in the long run,' said Emmeline, feeling herself quite an experienced housekeeper.

She had often heard grown-up people talk of things being cheaper in the long run.

'Shall we send them for you?' asked the young man, as he reached down the jar containing the monkey-nuts.

'Oh no, we'll take them with us, please,' said Emmeline hastily.

'I'll make two parcels of them then. They'd be rather a lot for one to carry. Now, is there anything else we can do for you, to-day?' he added, as he poured out the monkey-nuts into two large, stout paper-bags.

'I'll have sixpennyworth of milk-chocolate, please,' said Emmeline. 'I suppose it is more nourishing than plain chocolate?'

'Most nourishing thing you can eat next to monkey-nuts, and, of course, Omnibus Nuts,' said the youth cheerfully, as he served her with it.

'George Albert, I'm ashamed of you—telling such crams!' exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, as soon as the children had left the shop.

'It was all in the way of business,' said George Albert, 'and I dare say monkey-nuts will do every bit as well as Omnibus Nuts, whatever they may be.'

Emmeline meantime gave Micky a little lecture as they walked away from the shop.

'I do wish you would be more careful,' she was saying. 'You very nearly let out about Diamond Jubilee just now.'

'I never said his name even,' said Micky indignantly; 'I've been most frightfully careful.'

'You said quite enough to let out, if anyone had been paying much attention,' said Emmeline, severely. 'Luckily Mrs. Freeman seemed thoroughly stupid, but I don't feel sure that sharp young man mayn't have guessed something.'

Micky thought it as well to change the subject.

'We seem to have got a great many monkey-nuts for one boy,' he remarked, peering into his

bag. 'Don't you think he'll get rather tired of them before they're done?'

'Oh no, Micky. What silly ideas you have!' said Emmeline impatiently. 'You must remember that Diamond Jubilee isn't like us. I expect he's often been used to going days and days without the least little scrap of food; so he ought to be only too thankful to have plenty of nice, nourishing monkey-nuts.'

They had got well outside the village, and were just passing a farm famous for its apple-orchard, when Emmeline was startled, and Micky interested, by sounds of wrath and battle.

'Get out, you young varmint!' shouted an angry voice; 'and if ever I catch you in my orchard again I'll give you such a warming——'

Emmeline lost the rest of the sentence in her fright and dismay at being almost knocked down by a ragged, dirty, and altogether disreputable little tramp, who rushed out into the road looking the very picture of guilt.

'Diamond Jubilee!!!!' she gasped, with at least six notes of horror in her voice, but terror of the promised warming had lent wings to Diamond Jubilee's usually laggard feet, and he flew past her quite unheeding. He never once stopped till forty good yards lay between himself and the farm; then he turned round, and after making quite sure that he was not being pursued, gave



vent to language which it was just as well Micky and Emmeline were too far off to catch. As it was they merely got the benefit of the eloquent gesture—a favourite one in Diamond Jubilee's circle—by which he expressed his utter and unspeakable contempt for the farmer.

Perhaps it was then for the first time that Emmeline fully realised the appalling amount of training her adopted son would need before he would be at all a satisfactory missionary.

'Micky, he's a *dreadful* little boy!' she gasped.

Indignation caused her to quicken her pace, and as Diamond Jubilee, now no longer in fear of pursuit, was sauntering along like the proverbial snail, they soon overtook him. He greeted them with a cool 'Hello!'

'Diamond Jubilee, I can't tell you how ashamed and grieved I am,' began Emmeline, in the voice which she considered suitable to a sorrow-stricken and virtuous parent addressing an unworthy child.

Diamond Jubilee gave her an impudent stare.

'Garn!' he said. 'What are you getting at me for?'

'I'm much too upset to "get" at you as you call it,' said Emmeline, sorrowfully. 'To think of *you* robbing an orchard, Diamond Jubilee, and after all I said to you this morning, too!'

It is painful to have to relate what followed, but

as this is a true history of Diamond Jubilee Jones and of Micky, his adopted father, the regrettable incident cannot be shirked. Instead of being moved to penitence by Emmeline's appeal, Diamond Jubilee's only answer was to jerk his forefinger and thumb into a repetition of his former gesture, only this time it was pointed not towards the farm, but at Emmeline herself.

The sight was too much for Micky's sense of chivalry.

'I'll teach you to cheek my sister!' he shouted, flinging down his bag of nuts and rushing at Diamond Jubilee with doubled fists. 'You little beast, you!'

Now Diamond Jubilee, though older and a trifle taller than Micky, was in nothing like as good form. Moreover, his recent visit to the apple-orchard had been a bad preparation for a stand-up fight; so in another minute he was lying on his back in the dusty road, while Micky was seated firmly aside his prostrate body.

'No, I shan't get up till you've apologised,' said Micky sternly.

'Ow! You're hurting me!' squealed Diamond Jubilee.

'Micky, do get up,' said Emmeline. 'You may really hurt him.'

'Don't care if I do. Shan't get up till he's apologised,' said Micky.

'I'm sure he's very sorry, aren't you, Diamond Jubilee!' said Emmeline.

'Ow!' squealed Diamond Jubilee again.

'Say after me, "I humbly apologise for being a cad,"' said Micky, relentlessly.

'I humbly Polly's eyes——' gasped Diamond Jubilee, who would have said anything required of him at that moment. 'Ow! Get off, can't you?'

'Say "for being a cad,"' persisted Micky, 'then I'll get off.'

'Micky, *do* get off,' pleaded Emmeline, who was beginning to be really unhappy.

'For being a cad,' repeated Micky, firmly.

'For being a cad,' groaned Diamond Jubilee; on which Micky sprang up with the suddenness of a triumphant Jack-in-the-box.

'Shake hands,' commanded Micky, stretching out his paw as Diamond Jubilee rose from the ground slowly and rather sulkily. For a moment the street-arab seemed to hesitate. Then, sheepish but not unfriendly, he put his very grimy little hands into Micky's.

'That's the sporting way to end a fight,' explained Micky; 'and now Emmeline and I will have to go home to dinner or we'll be late, and though Aunt Grace went to London this morning, so that there isn't her to think of, there'll be a row with Jane, which is much worse.'

'Yes, and we had better give you your own

dinner, as we have met you,' said Emmeline, 'here it is—chocolate and monkey-nuts. They are quite the best foods there are,' she added hastily; 'anyone who eats them could do perfectly well without anything else.'

In spite of what she had said to Micky, a sneaking doubt as to whether Diamond Jubilee would approve of being the person to try the experiment, made Emmeline keep to general terms. There would be time enough to break to him that chocolate and monkey-nuts were to form his sole and lasting diet when he had already become fat and flourishing on them.

He accepted the two big bags of monkey-nuts and a small piece of milk chocolate (she had judged it best to break off a fraction of that dainty rather than to entrust him with the whole fortnight's portion), without any particular sign, either of pleasure or disgust. Probably his half hour in the apple-orchard had made him unusually indifferent to what he ate.

'I shan't give you any more nuts for three weeks,' Emmeline told him, 'so you must be careful of them and not eat too many now. Can I trust you, I wonder? I'd keep them for you only it wouldn't be convenient.'

It would not have been at all convenient. Jane had a tiresome habit of prying into cupboards and under beds and in all sorts of other places, which

the children felt ought to have been considered private; and as another annoying trait in her character was a strong theory that nuts of all kinds were bad for young people, the presence, however unobtrusive, of two large bags of monkey-nuts in the house, would almost certainly have led to trouble.

‘Garn! I aren’t *that* fond of them monkey-nuts,’ said Diamond Jubilee mildly. He had not the faintest suspicion, poor boy, that they were expected to be his staple food even for that day, let alone for an indefinite number of days to come!

They left him sitting under a hedge eating his chocolate, and with a bag of monkey-nuts on either side of him. Numbers of other nuts which had been spilt out of Micky’s bag when he flung it down, lay scattered about the road, but Diamond Jubilee had made no effort to pick them up.

‘We forgot to tell him anywhere to meet us this afternoon,’ remarked Micky, as he and Emmeline were crossing the garden.

‘Oh, I don’t know that I want to meet him again,’ said Emmeline wearily—‘I mean not this afternoon,’ she added quickly, as Micky looked up at her with round-eyed surprise.





"OH, WHAT *shall* WE DO?" SHE SORBED.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE SPARE ROOM BLANKETS

'I've thought of a splendid game for this afternoon,' announced Micky, as the children were finishing dinner. 'We'll find Diamond Jubilee, and go to the Feudal Castle to play it, for it's a Feudal Castle game. Diamond Jubilee is to be an awfully ragged, dirty pilgrim come back from the Crusades, and Kitty and I will be quite rude to him at first; but when the Lady of the Castle—that's Emmeline—sees him (you *will* come, won't you, Emmeline?), you'll fling your arms round his neck and cry, "Here is my long lost son!" for your mother's heart will tell you directly who he is.'

'Oh, Micky! I think that's a silly game,' said Emmeline. 'Diamond Jubilee really isn't clean enough for anyone to fling their arms around his neck. I hope you didn't get very close to him in the summer-house last night?' she added anxiously.

'Oh no! He rolled up in one blanket and I rolled up in the other,' Micky assured her. 'But how fussy you are getting! I think it's horrid of

you first to adopt him and then not want us to play with him, just because he's rather dirty.'

'Don't be so silly and exaggerating, Micky. I only didn't want you to play at that sort of game. I think it will be a very good plan if you take Diamond Jubilee to the Feudal Castle and play at something sensible there, for it may get him used to the place before to-night.'

'But I don't want to play at something sensible,' persisted Micky. 'I want to play at what I said.'

'I know what!' broke in Kitty, who was always a peacemaker. 'Emmeline can be a stepmother; then she won't have to fling her arms round his neck.'

'My game was better,' grumbled Micky, 'but I suppose if Emmeline won't be the mother, she'll have to be the stepmother.'

'I don't know whether I shall be able to be anything,' said Emmeline. 'You see, I want to get the blankets to the Feudal Castle this afternoon, because I think Diamond Jubilee might settle down there if once his blankets were there, and of course I shall have to wait and watch for a chance of getting them out when nobody's looking.'

'Shall Kitty and I stop and help you?' asked Micky eagerly.

Real actual plotting, if only about blankets, was

more fun than the most splendid story-game ever invented.

‘Oh, I can manage quite well by myself,’ said Emmeline; ‘and you would find it very dull waiting, perhaps ever so long, for a chance of getting the blankets out of the kennel. Besides, what I really want you to do is to keep Diamond Jubilee safe amused and out of the garden, and if you can get him to like the Feudal Castle it’ll be the greatest help of all. You see, he simply *must* sleep there alone to-night. It would be too much of a risk for you to sleep out with him in the summer-house again.’

‘Don’t mean to,’ said Micky cheerfully; ‘the summer-house is very nice for an adventure, but not for always.’ As a matter of fact, it had been so extremely hard and cold that it had only been by dint of pretending that he was in prison that Micky had enjoyed it even as an adventure.

To be able to play at a story-game, and to feel at the same time that they were being ‘the greatest help of all’ in the Diamond Jubilee secret, was delightful to the twins; so they and Punch trotted out of the garden to look for him as soon as ever dinner was over; whilst Emmeline reached down ‘The Wide Wide World’ from its place in the bookshelf, and took it out with her to the wooden seat on the back lawn, where she meant to wait and watch for the coast to be clear.



It was anything but clear for the moment, for Mr. Brown was doing something to one of the flower-beds at one end of the lawn, and Cook's face kept appearing at the scullery window, but Emmeline settled herself down to wait very contentedly. 'The Wide Wide World' was a book of which she never grew tired, and a quiet, peaceful time for reading it was far more to her taste than an afternoon with Diamond Jubilee. Try as she would, she could not feel much craving for the company of her adopted son.

Ten minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour passed. Emmeline looked up from her story. Cook had disappeared from the scullery window—probably she had gone upstairs to dress for the afternoon—but that tiresome Mr. Brown was still attending to his flower-bed. Clearly it was not yet the moment for making her raid, and with a sigh, half of disappointment, half of relief, Emmeline relapsed into her tale.

She had been reading for longer than she realised, when she was started by the crunching of footsteps on the gravel, and turning her head, saw Kitty and Punch coming up the path.

'Haven't you got them out yet?' asked Kitty in a disappointed voice as she came close up to Emmeline.

'How can I, with Mr. Brown always about? There—I do believe he has finished at last! Oh

no, he's only going to that other bed !' exclaimed Emmeline, as Mr. Brown stopped at the flower-bed just beneath the schoolroom window. 'What have you come back for?' she added. 'It's not nearly tea-time yet.'

'Diamond Jubilee said the monkey-nuts had made him so thirsty he must have a drink of water,' explained Kitty, 'so I thought I'd see if I couldn't take him some in the tooth-glass. I shall have to wait till Mr. Brown's gone, though,' and she flung herself down on the lawn by Emmeline's side. 'We met Diamond Jubilee just outside the garden,' she continued, 'and we've been having a lovely time—at least, the last part of it was lovely. The first part he wasn't well (do you know, Emmeline, I'm afraid monkey-nuts don't agree with him; he calls them "blooming," and he'd have thrown what's left of them away, only Micky wouldn't let him); but after he got well again we took him to the Feudal Castle, which he doesn't seem to mind when we're there, and he told us all sorts of exciting things about Green Ginger Land. It sounds lovely, and like a fairy-story, doesn't it? But it's really the place where Diamond Jubilee lived with Mother Grimes and lots of other interesting people.'

'How very naughty of him to grumble at his food!' broke in Emmeline, who had not been paying much attention to the last part of Kitty's

remarks. 'I expect it was all those unripe apples he stole that really disagreed with him, not the monkey-nuts. He certainly is an extremely trying boy.'

'Come you here, Punch!' Mr. Brown suddenly shouted in a very angry voice, causing Emmeline to jump violently, and Punch, who had been happily employed in smelling about for imaginary rats, to spring on to her knee, and begin wagging his tail in a frightened, deprecating way.

'What's the matter, Mr. Brown?' called out Kitty, bristling up directly. 'Punch has been as good as gold—haven't you, darling?' and she kissed one of his tan cheeks.

Mr. Brown was striding towards them with a wrathful face. 'Good as gold, have he?' he echoed, indignantly. 'I'll teach him to be as good as gold! Trolloping over the flower-beds, and breaking my best chrysanth'ums! A good-as-gold beating's what he deserves.'

'No, he doesn't! You shan't touch him, Mr. Brown, you cruel, wicked man!' screamed Kitty, while Punch raised his shrill, exasperating alarm-bark, and Emmeline bent over him protectingly.

'I shan't have a flower left in the garden soon,' continued the angry Mr. Brown, 'and I reckoned to have taken this one to the Show!'

'Which one was it?' asked Emmeline, uneasily  
Oh, do be quiet, Punch!'

'That real fine one just underneath the scullery window,' was the answer. 'There's his footmarks all over the bed, so I know it must have been him done it. Just you give him up to me, and I'll teach him a lesson. It ain't the first time he've done it, not by a long way.'

'No, no—you shan't!' cried Emmeline, terrified for the dog, and grasping him more tightly, while Kitty burst into tears, and Punch himself barked more shrilly than ever.

'Why, whatever's the matter?' called out Cook, suddenly appearing at the back-yard door.

Never had the sight of her round, good-natured face been so welcome. Emmeline gasped an 'Oh!' of relief, and Kitty almost flew up the path to meet her. 'Cook,' she implored, 'You won't let Mr. Brown beat Punch, will you?'

'What do you want to beat the poor creature for?' demanded Cook, who could always be depended on to take the part of any animal in trouble, more especially against Mr. Brown, with whom she was never very good friends. 'He haven't done no harm to nobody that I can see.'

'Oh, in course not! Breaking my show chrysanth'um is no harm at all, is it?' asked Mr. Brown, which he meant for crushing sarcasm.

'Well, and how do you know it was him done it? That might have been the wind,' retorted

Cook, who privately suspected Master Micky, but would not have said so for the world.

'There was his footmarks all over the bed,' said Mr. Brown. 'Oh, he done it sure enough, and he deserve a good beating sure enough.'

'Well, you shan't give him one,' said Cook, defiantly, as she bent down and lifted Punch from Emmeline's knee, 'not without you want me to write and complain to Miss Bolton, who'd never let you beat him for a thing like that, which you know as well as I do. He's going to the back-yard now, so he won't do no more harm to your chrysanth'ums, and don't you do no harm to him.' And with that she marched off, carrying Punch, who was barking vehemently from his safe place of vantage in her arms.

'We'll, you'll have to keep him chained up there then,' called Mr. Brown after them as a parting shot, 'for if I catch him about my garden you'll know what he can expect.'

'Oh, Mr. Brown!' cried Kitty, dismayed at the vista of endless captivity which seemed to be opening before poor Punch, 'you *don't* mean to say you'll never let him run about the garden again?'

Of course Mr. Brown did not seriously mean any such thing, but it pleased him to walk away grimly, muttering terrible threats about what he would do to Punch if he caught him in the garden



again, and poor Kitty, who fully believed all he said, burst into fresh tears. 'Oh, what *shall* we do?' she sobbed. 'Punch'll die of grief, if he has to be chained up for always!'

'Oh, but Aunt Grace would never stand that,' said Emmeline, trying to comfort Kitty, though she herself felt very unhappy, 'and, of course, it's she who will really have to settle. It's rubbish for Mr. Brown to talk as if this was his garden.'

'I can't help being afraid,' she went on uneasily, 'that it may have been Micky who broke that chrysanthemum last night, when he jumped down from the schoolroom window. You see it was exactly underneath the schoolroom window—just where he would jump. I wonder Mr. Brown didn't notice his footsteps, but I suppose the rain in the night must have washed them out, and, of course, the ones he made this morning when he was swarming up the water-pipe would be a little further along.'

'If it was Micky it makes it all the harder on poor darling Punch,' said Kitty sorrowfully.

'Well, we can't be sure, you know, said Emmeline. 'Anyhow, it's no good crying over it now—it isn't as if Punch had been whipped. There's Mr. Brown going round to the front of the house! You'd better run and get Diamond Jubilee's water, and take it out to him while you can, and I'll see if I can get out the blankets.'

This diverted Kitty's attention from Punch's wrongs, and she ran into the house wiping her eyes on her overall sleeve. Emmeline made her way to the yard, but found Cook standing there trying to comfort poor Punch, who had just been chained up, and who looked as though he did not at all understand or like having to go to bed so early.

'So you've come to talk to the poor animal,' remarked Cook. 'I reckon it's best to chain him up for a bit, or he'd be running out into the garden and getting into Mr. Brown's way, but it do seem hard.'

'Do you think he would really beat him?' asked Emmeline, trying to conceal the fact that she was rather dismayed at finding anybody there.

'Well, I can't say,' was the answer; 'he haven't no love for dumb creatures, that's certain, though he isn't what you could call a cruel man. Anyway, it won't do no harm to keep Punch out of his way for a little.'

Emmeline talked to Cook and Punch for a minute or two longer, and then went back into the garden. Unfortunately Mr. Brown, too, had returned by this time, so it was plainly hopeless to think of taking out the blankets yet, even when Cook left the yard. Meanwhile Punch, left alone in the dull backyard, was feeling himself a very

much injured dog. He proclaimed the fact to the world by a series of yelping barks, but he was an animal of a philosophic turn of mind, so it presently struck him that, since he was chained up at this untimely hour, he might as well retire into his kennel and go to sleep comfortably in the snug dark corner at the very back.

Ah! That special corner was already occupied by something woolly and unfamiliar—something which crowded Punch uncomfortably, something which was, in fact, nothing more nor less than one of the spare room blankets! It had fallen a little from the tumbled heap in which Micky had pushed it, so that it now took up a good deal more room than it had done in the morning.

If Punch had been in a sleepier or lazier mood he might have managed to make it into a cosy nest for himself. As it was, he chose to pretend that it was a giant white rat, and to treat it accordingly. It was really an ideal game for a bored fox-terrier—from the bored fox-terrier's own point of view, that is.

Unfortunately, Jane's point of view was a different one, and when she presently came into the back-yard to hang up some odds and ends that she had been washing, and found Punch worrying a great heap of defenceless blanket which was protruding from his kennel, her horror and indig-

nation knew no bounds. She could hardly believe her own eyes indeed, till she had come close up to the kennel and bent down to examine Punch's plaything. Yes, it really *was* a blanket!

'It's them children again!' she cried wrathfully. 'Why, bless me'—with a voice growing shriller and shriller—'bless me, if it isn't one of them *new* blankets we got special for the spare room!'

Cook and Alice came running out into the yard to see what was the matter, and Punch, who had left off worrying the blanket, began wagging his tail nervously. He was not used to holding such a levée, and felt more embarrassed than gratified at all the attention which was being paid him.

'Well, I never!' exclaimed Cook, as Jane gave such a violent tug to that part of the blanket which was lying outside the kennel that the rest of it also emerged. 'However on earth did it get there?'

'It's them wicked children, of course,' said Jane, angrily. 'And if I don't make them sorry for it, my name isn't Jane Martin!'

'Oh, we can trust you for that!' remarked Cook. 'But I must say this do beat everything. Cheer up, Punch, old boy! Nobody's going to hurt you.' She was just bending down to pat him reassuringly, when she uttered a sudden exclamation: 'Why, I do believe there's another

of them! There! Come you out, Punch. Yes, there really is.' ●

Jane paused in the vicious shaking she was giving the first blanket, and stared at Cook in a startled way. 'Another what?' she demanded. 'You don't mean to say another *dog*?' Jane hated dogs.

Cook laughed with unnecessary heartiness. 'No, another blanket,' she exclaimed between her peals of mirth. 'Here, get away, Punch, and let me look.' She undid the animal's chain, and then, as he bounded about in great delight, she poked first a head and then a long arm into the kennel, whence she presently came out red, panting, and triumphantly holding up a second blanket!

'Well!' gasped Jane, and stopped short, unable for the moment to find words strong enough to express her feelings.

Then Alice gave a nervous giggle, and Jane turned round on her sharply.

'What business have you here, miss, laughing at your betters?' she demanded angrily. 'I'll teach you——'

What she meant to teach Alice never appeared, for just at that moment the yard-door was flung violently open, and in rushed Micky, hot, breathless, and dirty, with Kitty following close on his heels. ●

'It was I who broke the chrysanthemum, not



Punch,' panted Micky. 'Unchain him—oh, I see he is unchained! That's all right.'

'All right, is it, Master Micky?' cried Jane, shrilly. 'This'—and she held up her blanket—'*this* isn't what I call all right, nor *that* either!' and she pointed to the other blanket.

Kitty looked thoroughly scared, and for a fraction of a second even Micky seemed rather taken aback, but he recovered himself instantly.

'I'm so sorry you don't like the blankets,' he remarked politely. 'Aunt Grace will be disappointed, too, for I'm sure she meant to get nice ones for the spare room.'

'Well, of all the impudent children!' ejaculated the outraged Jane.

'Why,' cried Emmeline, who came hurrying in to see what was going on, 'what's the mat——' She broke off suddenly, and turned quite pale as she caught sight of the blankets. Everything would be found out now!

'The matter is, Miss Emmeline,' said Jane, 'that the new spare room blankets have just been found in a disgusting, dirty dog-kennel.' ('Well, I gave it a wash-out last week, so it can't be so bad as all that,' murmured Cook in a low voice.) 'Put there, I'm very much afraid, by Master Micky,' went on Jane, disregarding the interruption, and fixing Micky with an awful glare.

'Yes, I put them there myself this morning,' said Micky.

'You did, did you?' cried Jane, dropping her tragic tone and relapsing into shrillness. 'And may I make so bold as to ask what you put them there for?'

Emmeline was trembling so much that she had to steady herself against the door-post. What *would* Micky say?

'Oh, I thought it would be a nice safe place to keep them in,' answered Micky, with great serenity.

This was altogether too much for Jane.

'You're the naughtiest, most mis-*chiev*-ous child that ever I saw!' she exclaimed, taking him by the shoulders and shaking him till his teeth chattered. 'It's downright pure mischievousness—that's what it is, and I'll make you sorry for it, that I will! You'll come off to bed this very moment.'

Kitty burst into a howl of sympathy. To be sent to bed was the most terrible punishment known to the little Boltons.

'Oh, Jane, give him just *one* more trial,' she wailed. 'He'll never do it again—w-will you, Micky?'

'Never mind, Kitty,' said Micky, assuming an air of saintly resignation which maddened Jane. 'I'll try to bear it, and she'll be sorry one day.'

‘Bear it or not, you’ll come to bed *this instant!*’ said Jane, seizing hold of his sailor-collar and marching him off.

Just as they reached the door into the kitchen, she paused to say to Alice: ‘You’d better hang them blankets upon the line. I’ll not have them in the house again till they have been well washed, after being stuffed up with that dirty dog.’

‘There’s many a Christian been a longer time without a bath than Punch,’ remarked Cook; whereupon Micky turned his head and gave Emmeline as deliberate a wink as Jane allowed him time for. Luckily neither Jane nor Cook seemed to notice the wink, or if they did, they merely took it for one more sign of the outrageous ‘mischievousness,’ which was supposed to account for the blankets being found in the kennel at all.

Emmeline began to breathe freely again when once Jane and Micky had disappeared into the house. It had been a dreadful five minutes, but they seemed to have come out of the scrape better than could have been expected.

## CHAPTER XII

### TROUBLES

IN spite of Emmeline's relief that the blanket affair had passed off without their secret being discovered, the rest of the afternoon was thoroughly spoilt for both her and Kitty.

Kitty left off crying presently and stole upstairs to take the now empty tooth-glass out of its hiding-place in her dress-pocket underneath her overall; after which she went on to Micky's room in the hope of being able to bear him company. Jane had locked the door however, and carried off the key, so that Kitty had to creep downstairs again, feeling very much grieved and disappointed.

'It does seem hard poor Micky should have all the punishment when we were just as much in it really,' Kitty remarked sadly to Emmeline.

'Well, but we weren't quite,' said Emmeline, 'putting the blankets in the kennel was quite his own idea, you know.' But, in spite of this, she was too fair-minded a child not to feel uncomfortable at the injustice as well as very sorry for poor

Micky. But what troubled her most was the fact that the blankets would no longer be available. Diamond Jubilee would be so cold without them, and, besides, how should she persuade him to sleep at the Feudal Castle now that they could not be held out as an inducement? She had been worrying over the problem for a good while when it suddenly struck her that she had read somewhere that newspapers made almost as warm a bed-covering as blankets. How would it be to take some out to the Feudal Castle? She knew just where the old *Standards* were kept.

Unhappily it was nearly tea-time when Emmeline had this brilliant inspiration, and just as she was getting up to carry it into effect, Jane came across the lawn to where the two girls were sitting with the glum announcement that it was time to come in and get tidy.

‘Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage!’

sang Micky’s voice, very loud and very much out of tune.

They all looked up, startled, and saw him leaning out of his window, clad in his flannel pyjamas, and grinning defiantly.

‘Master Micky, if you don’t get back to bed *this instant*, you shan’t have any tea at all, not even dry bread,’ said Jane, and Micky beat a



hasty retreat. Troubles never took away his appetite, and he knew from past experience that Jane's threats were not empty ones.

It was soon Kitty's turn to get into trouble. Never was there such a day of scrapes.

They were in the middle of tea when Jane stalked grimly in, carrying an article, the sight of which nearly made Emmeline drop her cup with fright. It was the hot-water can with Kitty's sash attached to its spout and handle. All the agitations of the day had driven the thought of it out of their heads, and it had lain forgotten under its laurel-bush until five minutes ago, when Mr. Brown had unfortunately caught a glimpse of the blue sash and dragged it to light.

'What's the meaning of this, Miss Kitty?' demanded Jane, in a voice of awful calm.

Kitty had nothing like Micky's coolness. She turned crimson, hung her head, and muttered something about a lift, which made Emmeline feel terribly alarmed as to what she might be going to let out.

'A lift!' sniffed Jane, pouncing on the poor word, 'and what have you been *lifting* with your best party sash, I'd like to know? Leaving it out in the rain, too, till the colour's all run, and it's only fit for the rag-bag!'

'It was—some things I wanted to let down to Micky in the garden,' stammered Kitty, looking

as though she very much hoped the floor would open and swallow her up.

‘Umph!’ grunted Jane. ‘Toys, I suppose, that he was too lazy to go up and fetch for himself, so he made you save him the trouble, same as he did the other day. *I* know his ways!’ (As a matter of fact, Micky was anything but lazy; and, though it was quite true that Jane had caught Kitty fagging for him the other day, that was only because he had happened to be a cruel slave-owner for the afternoon.) ‘That was it, wasn’t it?’

Kitty blushed a yet deeper crimson, and hung her head a little lower.

‘I thought so!’ said Jane. ‘Well, *you* can come to bed, too, and then perhaps you’ll know better another time. Come along,’ and, seizing Kitty’s hand, she marched off with her, muttering something about never having known such goings on in all her born days.

Emmeline could hear Kitty bursting into a howl as she was led upstairs, and she herself felt so unhappy that she could hardly find it in her heart even to be relieved that Jane had not been more pressing in her questions. It was not only that she was sorry for Kitty, but it seemed so mean to let the twins be punished without coming forward to take her share of the blame; and yet, of course, it would be impossible to do so without betraying

the secret and ruining everything. 'And that I mustn't do, for Diamond Jubilee's sake,' she told herself; 'but, oh dear, I never guessed, when I first started the idea of adopting him, that it would lead to all this worry!'

She was not long in finishing her now solitary meal, for a restless desire had seized her to be up and doing. She was just going to the cupboard where the old *Standards* were kept, when a sudden thought made her pause. Aunt Grace had once told the children that they were on their honour to begin their lessons for the next day as soon as tea was over, and that she trusted them to do so, whether or not she was there to see.

'I suppose I must wait, then,' she said to herself, with an impatient sigh, as she turned away and went slowly up to the school-room. It was very tiresome, when she did so want to go and settle Diamond Jubilee in for the night at the Feudal Castle.

Her lessons took her longer than usual that evening, for she found it very hard to give her full attention to them; but she had almost finished when she was startled by Jane's coming in with the supper-tray.

'Why, it can't be eight o'clock yet!' she exclaimed.

'No, Miss Emmeline, it's only just past seven; but Cook and I are going to church, and choir-

practice afterwards, and we shan't be in till past nine, so I thought I'd better bring you your supper now.'

'Oh, I see,' said Emmeline, in the voice in which people close a subject, but rather to her annoyance, Jane still lingered.

'Miss Emmeline,' she began, with evident hesitation, 'there's something I think it right to warn you about.'

'What is it?' asked Emmeline nervously. She felt a sudden dread that the warning might have something to do with Diamond Jubilee.

'Well, it's about Alice,' said Jane. (Emmeline breathed freely again.) 'I hardly like to speak of it, but I feel it's my duty. You know Tuesday's the day she always turns out your room. Well, when I went in there to put Miss Kitty to bed, I noticed the box which you keep the money in for the Poor Children's Home had fallen off your chest of drawers and was lying on the floor. Well, I picked it up'—she paused, and went on impressively—'and I found it was quite empty!'

'Was it?' said Emmeline, uneasily. 'But I don't see what Alice has to do with it.'

'And you wouldn't see,' said Jane, in the tone habitual to grieved charity, 'not unless you knew Alice's history. She was turned away from her first place for taking some money that had been

left loose in a drawer, and Miss Bolton only took her to give her a chance of making a fresh start. She's been here six weeks now, and nothing's been missed, so we did hope she was going to do better, but I'm afraid now she is falling back into her old ways, and that we shall have to part with her. But don't you say anything about this to anybody, please, Miss Emmeline. I only told you as a warning to be careful what you leave about, and because I knew you'd wonder about the box being empty.'

Never in her life had Emmeline felt so miserably uncomfortable. She was a naturally honourable child, and at the bottom of her heart she knew that she ought to confess to having taken the money herself, and not let Alice rest under unjust suspicion a moment longer. But then Jane would ask horrid prying questions and everything would come out. After all, she told herself, she was really not bound to confide in Jane; it was no business of Jane's what she did with her money.

'I don't think it's at all charitable of you to make out that poor Alice is a thief, when you can't possibly know anything about it!' she exclaimed hotly—she did feel very angry with Jane for having put her into such a horrid position—'and, anyhow, you can't send her away, only Aunt Grace can do that, and I'm sure she



won't without a much better reason for thinking Alice took the money.'

Jane was greatly offended and astonished.

'I hope I know my place, Miss Emmeline,' she remarked huffily, 'I should never think of giving Alice notice myself, but I've no doubt that Miss Bolton will when I've told her my suspicions, which I shall feel it my bounden duty to do.'

'But Jane,' said Emmeline, almost crying, 'do try to have a little charity. You know how much the Bible says about charity!'

'Miss Emmeline,' said Jane, in her most dignified manner, 'I don't think I need any little girl to teach me about the Bible, which I've been through seven times already, and have got as far through the eighth time as the seventh of Numbers; but I know my duty, and my duty is to see that there are only honest servants in this house; and I think I'm a better judge of who are honest than any little girl!' And with this parting shot she stalked away, slamming the door behind her.

'Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?' said Emmeline, half aloud, as she wandered restlessly about the room. 'I never was in such a dreadful bother. Oh, what *can* I do?'

'Tell them you've taken the money yourself,' whispered her conscience: 'that's the only honest thing to do.'

‘But that would mean betraying Diamond Jubilee, and Aunt Grace would be sure to send him back to that wicked old Mother Grimes,’ said Emmeline, arguing with her conscience, as people do when they cannot make up their minds to the course of action which they know to be right. ‘Diamond Jubilee would be ruined body and soul. Perhaps some day he would be even hanged! No, I *must* think of some other way.’

But wander about as she might she could think of no other plan. She did indeed picture herself pleading eloquently with Aunt Grace not to send Alice away, but her conscience told her that even if she succeeded, she would still be wronging the girl by allowing her to remain under suspicion. Besides, Aunt Grace might not listen to her any more than Jane had done.

‘Well, anyhow, Jane can’t do anything till Aunt Grace comes home,’ she said to herself at last, ‘and there’ll be plenty of time for settling what to do before then, so I won’t think about it any more just now. It’s quite time to be seeing about Diamond Jubilee’s newspapers.’

The thought struck Emmeline that she might take Diamond Jubilee her own supper at the same time that she carried the newspapers to him. It would be an unusually good opportunity to do so now that Jane and Cook were both out; and, though she had meant him to live on nuts

and chocolate from that day forward, it seemed kinder to break him in more gradually. So thought Emmeline, with some vague instinct of trying to make up for any wrong she might be doing Alice, by being specially nice and unselfish to Diamond Jubilee.

A few minutes later she was standing on the outskirts of the wood with her glass of milk in one hand and her biscuit and bundle of newspapers in the other. It had been rather difficult to climb the railings without spilling the milk, and she could not help hoping she should not have to carry it very far before she came across Diamond Jubilee. She had half-expected to meet him already, lurking somewhere about the lane, or even in the garden itself; indeed, she had peeped into the summer-house just to make sure he was not there, but, so far, there had been no sign of him. Surely she would find him soon.

Walking slowly and cautiously for fear of spilling her milk, she made her way on towards the Feudal Castle. At every few yards she paused, and looked round and behind her. Just at first she did this in the hope of seeing Diamond Jubilee, but as the trees grew thicker her glances over her shoulder became more and more uneasy and hurried. Now that she was alone there in the eerie moonlight, the familiar wood was a frightening, uncanny place, full of weird shadows and dim

half-seen shapes—shapes which turned into trees when she stared at them hard, but which seemed to change slyly back into something quite different as soon as she looked away to see what was making that odd creaking noise on her other side. Once, when an owl gave a loud, unearthly hoot, it was as much as Emmeline could do not to fling down what she was carrying and run home in mad panic, but she was a child who never could bear to be beaten, so she set her teeth and walked steadily on.

After walking for a quarter of an hour, which seemed infinitely longer than any other fifteen minutes in the whole course of her life, she reached the Feudal Castle. It looked so horribly dark and lonely and deserted as it loomed up among those ghostly moonlit trees, that it was some moments before Emmeline could summon up courage to open the worm-eaten door and step into the darkness inside, but at last she forced herself to do so.

She started, and trembled all over at the echo of her own footsteps on the bare floor.

‘Are you there, Diamond Jubilee?’ she asked, in a voice which sounded to herself so unnatural that it frightened her more than ever.

There was no answer, but to her excited nerves the whole place seemed full of half-heard whisperings and mutterings. The terror of it was too

much for her, and, dropping her newspapers and the biscuit on to the floor, she fled out of the cottage and ran wildly home.

Once she tripped over a tree-root and fell, spilling all her milk, which had not already been splashed out—she had not dared to leave it at the Feudal Castle for fear of the glass being missed—but she scrambled up again without even waiting to find out whether she was hurt or the tumbler broken.

She was back at last in the safe hall of Fir-tree Cottage, blinking her eyes in the bright lamplight, and reflecting ruefully that, after all, her expedition had been of very little use, since she had not been able to tell Diamond Jubilee of the biscuit and newspapers which were awaiting him at the Feudal Castle if only he would go and sleep there, or to explain the purpose for which the newspapers were intended.

‘Well, it’s no use troubling about him any more to-night,’ she said to herself wearily as she went upstairs. ‘I’ve done all I can, and, anyhow, he doesn’t seem to be sleeping in the garden, which is one good thing. It’s very odd where he can be, though.’

She put the glass back on its tray—fortunately, it had not been broken—and went to her own room. It was not quite bedtime yet, but she was still feeling too creepy to want to sit up alone.



The first thing that met her ear when she opened the door was the sound of Kitty crying, not howling, as she often did, but just crying in a low, unhappy way.

‘Why, Kitty!’ exclaimed Emmeline, impatiently—it was a relief to be impatient with somebody just then—‘I thought you’d have been asleep long ago. You *are* a baby to be still crying because you were sent to bed early! You’d have been in bed by now, anyhow.’

‘It’s n-not that,’ sobbed Kitty.

‘What is it, then?’ demanded Emmeline, sharply.

‘Because—I don’t think I was *true* this afternoon,’ said Kitty, tearfully. ‘Jane asked if the lift was for Micky’s toys, and I lowered my head, and I think she thought I was nodding, though I didn’t mean her to, but I think she thought I meant it was. And Aunt Grace says it’s almost as bad as to let people think what’s not true as to tell a story. Oh, Emmeline, what shall I do?’

‘Oh, don’t be so silly, Kitty!’ said Emmeline, crossly. ‘Nobody would get on at all if they were so particular as all that—at least I don’t mean that exactly,’ as Kitty opened her eyes, ‘but you really mustn’t worry about fancies. It wasn’t your fault if Jane chose to take a wrong idea into her head.’

‘Then you’re *quite sure* I wasn’t untruthful?’ asked Kitty, trying hard to be reassured.

'Oh yes,' said Emmeline; 'and now go to sleep, and don't talk to me any more.'

Kitty obeyed for about five minutes, but when Emmeline rose from her knees again, after saying her prayers far more hurriedly than usual, the effort of silence became too great a strain for the little sister.

'Do you think adopting somebody always leads to such a lot of horridness?' she asked abruptly. 'I mean the wrong one being punished for what someone else did, and people not being sure that they haven't as good as told stories, and being sent to bed ever so early, and not having any supper when they're most frightfully hungry?'

'I don't know what you are talking about,' said Emmeline, frightened and angry. 'Who's being punished for what someone else did?'

'Why, Punch was, of course!' said Kitty, a little taken aback at Emmeline's manner; 'though Cook did give him an extra big supper afterwards to make up, she told me just now, but somehow I don't think even an extra big supper quite makes up for being accused of what you haven't done. Do you think it does, Emmeline?'

Emmeline made no answer, and Kitty felt snubbed and subsided into silence. Presently afterwards Emmeline jumped into bed and blew out the candle. The room had been dark for some little time, and Kitty was becoming sleepy when

she was startled wide-awake again by a strange sound in the part of the room where Emmeline was lying. She sat up, leaning on her elbows, and listened. Yes, there it was again! There could be no mistake about it. Emmeline was crying!

A moment later Kitty had scrambled on to Emmeline's counterpane, and was cuddling her in the most motherly way imaginable.

'What is it, my poor darling?' she was asking, in the tender voice that she usually kept for Punch. She and Micky, though very devoted, were not demonstrative to each other.

Just at first Emmeline went on sobbing without making any answer, in a way which was alarmingly strange to Kitty; and even when the answer did come, it puzzled Kitty more than it enlightened her. 'Oh, I wish I was a dear, good, little thing like you!' whispered Emmeline, catching hold of her.

'Why, Emmeline!' cried Kitty, with unfeigned astonishment. 'You are always ever so much gooder than me and Micky—quite annoyingly good sometimes.'

'No, I'm not,' cried Emmeline. 'I'm horrid!'

'I'm sure you're not horrid,' said Kitty loyally. 'You're very nice and kind. Why, Micky and I would never have even thought of taking Diamond Jubilee as a brand from the burning if it hadn't been for you!'

Perhaps this reflection was less comforting than Kitty imagined; but Emmeline relapsed into silence after that—silence which lasted so long that Kitty fancied she had fallen asleep, and crept back to her own bed.

But it was a long time before Emmeline really fell asleep that night.

## CHAPTER XIII

### GONE !

‘WHERE’S Micky?’ inquired Kitty the next morning when Jane came into the dining-room with the teapot and the grim announcement that breakfast was quite ready, and the young ladies had better come to table.

‘He’s a very naughty, dirty boy,’ said Jane, as though that was a sufficient answer to Kitty’s question.

‘He hasn’t had much time to be naughty yet, poor Micky!’ said Kitty, in an aggrieved voice.

The twins always expected the offences of yesterday to be buried in oblivion.

Jane did not see fit to notice the remark, and, when the door had closed behind her, Kitty returned to her wonder.

‘Do you suppose Micky’s been playing that his soap-dish is a ship in a storm as he did the other day, and that Jane won’t let him come down to breakfast?’

The guess was a fairly likely one, for the game to which Kitty alluded involved such a free dis-



persal of bath-water all over the floor that Jane was quite likely to consider it both naughty and dirty though, as Micky had pointed out, you could not well play with cleaner things than soap and water.

‘I don’t know, and don’t care,’ said Emmeline, shortly.

She had wakened up that morning in a very bad temper.

‘It’s rather horrid of you, then,’ said Kitty, reproachfully; ‘specially as there are eggs, and Micky didn’t have much tea last night or any supper, I don’t suppose. I think I’ll go up and see what’s happening to him. I don’t care if Jane does catch me.’

Emmeline did not trouble to make any objection, and Kitty departed on her quest. A moment later she returned with the news that it was all right; Micky was not in his room.

‘I expect he’s just out climbing trees somewhere, and will be in to breakfast directly,’ she surmised cheerfully, as she attacked her eggshell with energy.

But the minutes passed on, and no Micky appeared. By the time they had almost got through even the bread-and-jam stage of breakfast Emmeline was becoming rather anxious. It was so unlike Micky to show such indifference to his meals.

‘Isn’t he in yet?’ asked Jane, coming into the dining-room abruptly, and looking more worried than stern this time.

‘No, I suppose he must be in the wood somewhere, too far off to hear the bell,’ said Emmeline, more frightened by Jane’s manner than she had been before.

‘It’s the strangest thing where he can be,’ said Jane. ‘He was sleeping as peaceful as could be when I unlocked the door before starting to church yesterday evening, but when I went to call him this morning the bed was empty, and he was nowhere to be seen. He must have dressed and gone out without washing or anything, for the jug was still standing in the basin as I put it back last night. Not that there’s anything strange in that, for it’s just like his ways, but it is odd he isn’t in yet.’

‘I’ll just go out and see if I can find him,’ said Emmeline, rising from the table as she hastily swallowed a last mouthful of bread and jam.

‘I’ve been and looked all round the garden,’ said Jane; ‘and Alice went some little way into the wood, but she couldn’t see him anywhere. I can’t think what can have come to him.’

‘Oh, I expect he’ll turn up soon,’ said Emmeline, trying hard to feel confident.

‘We’ll hope so, Miss Emmeline,’ said Jane, gloomily.

Kitty's round honest face was looking rather scared.

'Do you think anything can have happened to Micky?' she asked anxiously, as Jane went out of the room.

'Oh no. I expect he's in the wood somewhere with Diamond Jubilee, and has just lost count of time,' said Emmeline, with determined cheerfulness. 'Very likely we shall find them both in the Feudal Castle.'

Accordingly they put on their hats and, going out into the wood, made their way towards the Feudal Castle. As they walked they kept shouting 'Micky!' 'Cooee!' at the tops of their voices, but there was never the faintest response.

'Well, I don't suppose they can hear us if they're right inside the Feudal Castle,' said Emmeline, hoarse, but still reassuring.

But when they reached the Feudal Castle neither Micky nor Diamond Jubilee was there; what was more, the uneaten biscuit, which was still lying among the newspapers just as Emmeline had dropped it, seemed to show that they never had been there since yesterday evening.

Even Emmeline's courage gave way at that point.

'Wherever *can* he be?' she exclaimed, almost tearfully. She might have said 'they,' but it was

odd how very little Diamond Jubilee seemed to matter just then.

‘I do believe *that* Diamond Jubilee’s at the bottom of it somehow,’ remarked Kitty, who was beginning to feel very miserable indeed.

Emmeline had all along had an uneasy suspicion that he might be, but she did not like to hear her own secret fear put into words by Kitty.

‘I don’t suppose it’s a bit more poor Diamond Jubilee’s fault than Micky’s,’ she snapped. ‘Most likely they’re both climbing trees somewhere a little farther on in the wood, and if they are it will have been Micky’s idea, not Diamond Jubilee’s. Come along.’

They left the Feudal Castle and continued their walk towards the Chudstone edge of the wood.

‘We shall be late for Miss Miller,’ remarked Emmeline; ‘but, really, we can’t trouble about lessons at such a crisis.’

That word ‘crisis’ afforded some little comfort to Emmeline for a moment; Aunt Grace had used it yesterday, and it sounded delightfully grown-up.

They went right to the end of the wood, cooeying all the way, but with no more success than before, after which there was clearly nothing to be done but to turn and go back home again. They did so, feeling too tired and too much out of heart even to cooe this time, or to make any

fresh conjectures as to what could have become of Micky. That silent walk home seemed to drag on a weary while, but it was over at last. No sooner had they opened the garden-door than they caught sight of Miss Miller, Jane, Cook, and Alice, all standing in a row on the gravel path near the back-yard door, and all evidently keeping an anxious lookout for the children's return. Perhaps the fact that the entire work of the household should be at a standstill while it waited for tidings brought home to Emmeline more than anything else how very serious the state of affairs was.

'Well, haven't you found him?' called out Cook, as the two girls approached.

'Of course they haven't! Do you think they've got him hidden in their pockets?' snapped Jane. Worry of mind was making her more short-tempered even than usual.

'No, we haven't found him, and we've been right to the Chudstone end of the wood to look for him,' said Emmeline, in a voice of utter discouragement, while big tears rolled down Kitty's cheeks.

'Don't cry, Kitty dear,' said Miss Miller, soothingly; 'Micky can't be very far off'; but, in spite of her cheering words, the governess's face was very anxious. She herself had just returned from looking for Micky in the village, where



nothing had been heard or seen of him. 'I wonder if we ought to wire to Miss Bolton,' she added, in a lower voice.

'I don't see that there's any call for that,' said Jane, grumpily. 'She'd only be worried to death between thinking she ought to come back here and not liking to leave Miss King. Besides, as likely as not Master Micky's only hiding somewhere near about for fun, for a more mischievous boy I never did see.'

'Well, perhaps it would be best not to telegraph just yet, at all events,' said Miss Miller, rather stiffly—she thought Jane apt to presume on her privileges as an old servant—'but one step I'm sure we ought to take is to give notice at Chudstone Police-Station that the child's missing. Then they'll telephone on to the other police-stations in the neighbourhood. I think that will be far more effective than going out to look for him, for as we don't know in the least which way to go, we might be wandering about the whole day without getting any nearer finding him. I'll just bicycle over to Chudstone now. While I'm gone you can be reading to Kitty the next story in the Greek history,' she added to Emmeline, with an idea of diverting their attention.

'Oh, Miss Miller,' broke in Kitty, with a fresh outbreak of tears, 'people just *can't* do Greek

history when their twins are lost! Do let us go and look for him in the wood just once more!

Miss Miller did not think the search likely to be any more successful than before, but she had not the heart to refuse. 'Well, you may go then,' she said, kindly, 'but don't go outside the wood, and come back as soon as it's eleven o'clock by Emmeline's watch, even if you haven't found him.'

Five minutes later Miss Miller had set out on her bicycle for Chudstone, and the two girls and Punch had begun another expedition through the woods. It had been a brilliant idea of Kitty's to include Punch in the party. 'In all the stories of children getting lost there's always a gallant Newfoundland who rescues them,' she had remarked. To be sure Punch was about as much like a gallant Newfoundland as the Feudal Castle was like a castle, but that was a detail.

'I expect Punch'll scent Micky out long before the police could find him,' said Kitty, almost cheering up again as she and Emmeline climbed the railings dividing the wood from the road. 'What shall we do supposing he tracks him out of the wood?' she went on as Emmeline kept silence, feeling too miserable to answer. 'For we promised Miss Miller not to go outside.'

'Oh, I don't know,' said Emmeline impatiently. 'There'll be time enough to think of that when he does track him out.'

There certainly was time enough. Punch's behaviour in the wood was most disappointing. It was in vain that they urged him to 'go find Micky, like a good dog.' He only stood stock still, wagging his tail apologetically, and staring up at them with a worried expression in his wistful brown eyes. It was so impossible to make him realise that for the first time in his life he was expected to take the lead in a walk, that at last, in despair, they had to give up trying to do. After that Punch trotted along happily a few feet behind them, except once when he raised their hopes cruelly by sniffing the ground violently and then rushing away among the bushes, only to come back a minute or two later with the rather crestfallen look he always had after wild and unsuccessful pursuits. It was only too plain that it had been a hunting expedition, not a rescue one.

'Oh, Punch, you aren't nearly so much good as a story dog!' complained poor Kitty, 'how can you think about hunting rabbits when Uncle Micky's lost?'

It was nearer twelve than eleven o'clock when the two girls came home again, after a weary and futile search, but Miss Miller did not say a word of reproach to them. She herself had not been waiting for them long, for, though her ride to Chudstone and back had only taken about half-

an-hour, she had since been out again looking for Micky here, there and everywhere. One or other of the servants too, had been constantly going off to some place where it had suddenly struck them that the boy might possibly be, but, so far, everybody's searching had been equally in vain. Micky might have disappeared from off the face of the earth for all the trace of him that they could find.

'Come up to the school-room and rest,' said Miss Miller, kindly. 'I won't bother you with any real lessons to-day, but I'll read some "Marmion" aloud to you.'

They were just reading 'Marmion' for their literature. As a rule they were thrilled by it, but this morning neither Emmeline nor Kitty took in much of what they read. Sitting still only made them realise their trouble the more vividly, and Kitty was on the verge of breaking into a howl when Jane came in to ask Miss Miller if she might speak to her alone for a moment. She made the request with such an air of mystery that Emmeline's heart began to thump wildly.

'Jane, tell me!' she gasped. 'Micky—has anything happened?'

'I know no more of Master Micky than you do,' said Jane. 'I only wish I did,' she added, in a gentler voice than the children had ever yet heard her use.

'I think I ought to tell you, Miss Miller,' began Jane, after Miss Miller had followed her from the room, 'Mrs. Tom Wright was round just now, and told us something which upset me very much. It seems her husband saw Master Micky playing in the wood yesterday afternoon with a little tramp boy.'

'Dear me! That doesn't seem suitable," remarked Miss Miller, trying hard to be as much shocked and surprised as Jane evidently expected.

'Well,' continued Jane solemnly, 'I shouldn't be a bit surprised if that little tramp boy isn't at the bottom of it all.'

'Of Micky's disappearing, do you mean?' asked Miss Miller, really surprised and alarmed this time. 'Why, what makes you think that?'

'Because yesterday afternoon wasn't the only time this last day or two that boy's been seen haunting about the place,' said Jane. 'I saw him myself on Monday night—at least, a boy who came round to the side-door begging answered very much to the description of the one Tom Wright saw in the wood. I thought at the time that I'd never seen such a filthy little creature as he was, but I gave him a hunch of bread—I always say that's good enough for them if they're really hungry—and when he asked for something more I just banged the door in his face, and I took care to bolt it directly afterwards top and



bottom. It was a good two hours before the usual time, but ever since my best umbrella was stolen I've been downright scared of tramps. But that isn't all. The very next morning—yesterday morning that is—Mr. Brown saw that same boy or his twin brother lurking about near the garden-door, for all the world as if he was waiting for someone. He sent him to the rightabout pretty quick. The only pity is he didn't do it for good and all, for I do believe it's that boy that has led away poor Master Micky.'

'But I don't understand,' said Miss Miller. 'Whatever should he want Micky for?'

'What do gipsies usually want children for?' rejoined Jane. 'Maybe it's for the sake of a reward, or maybe they think they could train him to be useful. Master Micky'd make a grand acrobat, to judge from the way he turns coach-wheels.'

Gipsies and people who travelled with shows were closely connected in Jane's mind.

'But are there any gipsies about?' asked Miss Miller.

'Not the real Romanies, but plenty of the sort of vagabonds that call themselves gipsies,' said Jane. 'There's a van of them in a field at Baddicomb at this very moment'—Baddicomb was a village about five miles off—'and one and another of them have been wandering about the country-side up to no end of mischief. Why, Mr. Warne got

his orchard robbed only yesterday by a boy that he says certainly doesn't belong hereabouts, and that's most likely one of them—most likely the very same that's got hold of Master Micky.'

'Well,' said Miss Miller, 'I think the best thing for me to do is to ride into Chudstone again, and suggest to the police that possibly the gipsies have got hold of the boy.'

Miss Miller said nothing about where she was going to either of her pupils. 'If only I had not to give two music-lessons this afternoon I would have come back again to see how you are getting on,' she said to Emmeline as she wheeled her bicycle out at the front door, 'for I can't bear not to be with you when you're in such trouble. Anyhow, I shall ride over again after tea just to see what's happening. I expect Micky will have turned up long before then,' with which cheering prophecy, spoken with more confidence than she could altogether feel, she mounted her flashing machine and rode off.

Kitty had rushed away somewhere by herself as soon as she was free to do what she liked, and Emmeline felt lonely and helpless as she stood in the drive looking after her governess. There seemed nothing she could do.

Stay! She would go up to her own room and pray very, very hard that Micky might be found. Perhaps that would succeed. At all events, it

would be better than this dreadful waiting and doing nothing. Emmeline wondered that she had not thought of it before.

She ran upstairs, but was rather taken aback to find her bedroom occupied by Alice, who was dusting the mantelpiece ornaments. To be sure, she hurried out of the room as soon as the young lady appeared, but not before Emmeline had seen that her eyes were red and swollen. Emmeline knelt down by her bedside, but, try as she would, she could not fix her thoughts. They kept wandering off to Alice.

That horrible money! The thought of it kept haunting Emmeline like some tormenting demon. She had almost forgotten it for a time in the trouble of the morning, but now it kept coming between her and her prayers. How could she expect them to be answered so long as she was deceiving everyone and letting Alice suffer under a false accusation?

'Nonsense,' she told herself. 'There's no deceiving in not telling that meddlesome Jane what I did with my own extra money-box money! I did tell her I was sure Alice hadn't taken it, and I don't think really she meant to make any fuss about it till Aunt Grace comes home. It *must* be about Micky Alice is crying. Anyhow, Aunt Grace is the person who really matters, not Jane, and, if she suspects Alice, I'll tell her that I took

the money. It would be very unkind to bother them about it just now when they're in such trouble. It would worry them dreadfully, for they'd be certain to ask questions, and it would all come out about Diamond Jubilee and his having disappeared, too, and they'd be sure to think Micky had run away with him, and then they'd write and frighten poor Aunt Grace. No, for Aunt Grace's sake, I really can't risk their finding out about Diamond Jubilee till Micky's safe back.'

She was still trying to persuade herself that she was justified in keeping silence about him, when the door was burst open, and in rushed Kitty, very untidy, and with short white hairs sticking all over her dress. In her hand was an extremely dirty, crumpled bit of paper, which looked as if it might have been torn out of an exercise-book.

She closed the door with a care very unlike her usual slap-dash ways, and came close up to Emmeline before she whispered mysteriously :

'Look what I've found in Punch's kennel! Mr. Brown had chained him up again, and I felt so miserable that I just had to be with the darling. He *is* such a comfort in trouble.'

Emmeline was not listening. She was staring at some pencilled words scribbled on the torn piece of paper

‘Dear Kitty’ (she read), ‘I am leving this were you’ll be the person most likely to find it. This is to tell you I am going back to grene ginger land with dimund joublee. Hes jolly well had enuf of this he ses, and so have I, speshally after yestidday, wich show how beestly everything will be with Jane to put peeple to bed just for akserdents like the blankets. Besids of corse as Im his adopted father I have to go to, or how could I trane him. It will be a jolly lark. Dont tell anyone were Ive gone except you may Emmeline, as shes in it too, and don’t greave for me too much dear sister. Your loving bother, Micky.’

‘Does Micky mean he won’t ever come back again?’ asked Kitty, with painful anxiety, as Emmeline screwed up the paper into a little ball, and began pacing up and down the room.

Emmeline did not seem to hear, so Kitty repeated the question in a voice which sounded as though she were on the point of bursting out crying out again.

‘No, of course not, you silly child,’ said Emmeline, impatiently. ‘At least, it doesn’t matter what he means—he won’t be allowed to, anyhow. Kitty,’ she added penitently, ‘I didn’t mean to be cross, only I’m so frightfully worried. It’s dreadful to think where Diamond Jubilee may be taking Micky to!’



'I wish we'd never met Diamond Jubilee!' moaned Kitty.

'So do I,' agreed Emmeline from the bottom of her heart; 'but the question now is what to do about Micky.'

'I suppose it would be betraying to tell any of the grown-up people when he says I'm not to?' said Kitty, doubtfully.

'I don't know,' said Emmeline. Her four years of seniority made her view things rather differently, but she had her own reasons for being even more unwilling than Kitty to show Micky's letter to any of the elders. 'No, I think we'd much better not say anything yet,' she added, after a moment's thought. 'It's not as if Aunt Grace were here, or even Miss Miller. But it's only the servants, and they can't care so very much'—she was doing them great injustice—'and it would only make a horrible fuss and worry them dreadfully. It will be much best for them not to know where Micky has gone till he's safe back again.'

'But how are we going to get him safe back again?' demanded Kitty, in a woeful voice.

'I'm going into Eastwich myself this afternoon to fetch him home,' said Emmeline, with studied coolness, though her heart was beating fast at the thought of taking such an unheard-of step on her own responsibility.

‘Oh, Emmeline!’ gasped Kitty, admiring, frightened, and astonished all at once. ‘But will they let you go?’ she added.

‘I shan’t ask them,’ said Emmeline. ‘It’s no business of theirs. They won’t even know I’m gone till tea-time, and by then Micky and I’ll be coming home together, I expect.’

‘Emmeline, you’re the cleverest, darlindest person in the world!’ cried Kitty, beginning an ecstatic dance round the room—a dance which stopped abruptly, however, as a sudden difficulty flashed into her mind. ‘How are you going to get money for a ticket?’ she asked.

Emmeline flushed a little.

‘There’s that eighteenpence Aunt Grace gave you just before she went away for the chickens’ food,’ she said a little awkwardly. ‘You know Cook said what they had would last for another week, so do you mind lending it me? We shall have our pocket-money in less than a week, you know, and we can use it all for paying back what we’ve borrowed from the chickens, for there won’t be Diamond Jubilee to think of now. I’m sure’s there’s no harm in just borrowing it for something so frightfully important as finding Micky.’

Kitty saw no harm at all in what Emmeline thought right.

‘I suppose there wouldn’t be money enough for me to go too?’ she suggested wistfully.

‘No, there wouldn’t,’ said Emmeline; ‘you must remember there’ll be Micky’s ticket back to get as well as mine. Besides, I expect I shall have to go into places that wouldn’t be at all fit for you. I’m sure Green Ginger Land must be a dreadful place.’

‘It sounds lovely!’ said Kitty, with a sigh; but she submitted to Emmeline’s decision with her usual sweet temper.

After all, so long as Micky came back that evening—and Kitty had not the slightest doubt that he would, since Emmeline said so—nothing else mattered.

‘Emmeline,’ said Kitty, anxiously, when the two were left alone together during dinner, ‘you won’t bring Diamond Jubilee back as well as Micky, will you?’

‘Not now he has run away,’ said Emmeline sternly. ‘He’s been such a wicked, ungrateful boy that I’m afraid we must leave him to his fate. After all,’ she added reflectively, ‘*perhaps* we’re rather too inexperienced to adopt children,’ which was an admission such as Emmeline had never yet made in the whole course of her life.

‘I am *so* glad!’ said Kitty, with a deep-drawn sigh of relief.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GREEN GINGER LAND

As soon as dinner was over Emmeline set out for Chudstone, for it was from there that she meant to start on her expedition in search of Micky.

Kitty went with her as far as the station. She had pleaded to be allowed to do so, and Emmeline consented the more readily because she was glad just then to have other company than that of her own thoughts. The servants saw the two girls leaving the house together, but took it for granted that they were merely going to play in the wood, so no awkward questions were asked.

All the way to Chudstone Emmeline laughed and chattered eagerly. She was trying hard to pretend to herself that she was doing a right and matter-of-course thing in setting off to Eastwich to find her little brother, without saying a word to any of the elders ; but, if she had really thought so at the bottom of her heart, she would not have gone out of her way to take the train at Chudstone.

‘I don’t quite know what time the 2.10 gets to Chudstone,’ she had remarked to Kitty, ‘but as it must be a few minutes later than the time it leaves Woodsleigh, it must be all right if I count it 2.10, just as usual.’ The Wednesday 2.10 was well known to Emmeline, for it was the special train run for the weekly half-day excursion to Eastwich, and Aunt Grace had sometimes travelled by it.

‘I do wish I was big, too, and could come with you, Emmeline!’ said Kitty, as she waited on Chudstone platform, while Emmeline leaned out of a carriage-window for those final words of parting, which are so necessary to all railway-travellers, and so inconvenient to the other people already established in the compartment. ‘It will be horribly dull all alone.’

‘You will have Punch, you know,’ Emmeline reminded her—Punch had not been brought with them, because his nervousness at railway-stations was apt to show itself in ways which made his friends nervous in their turn—‘and if you feel lonely without me, you’ll just have to think that I’m gone to fetch Micky home.’

The next moment the train was in motion, and Emmeline was sinking back into her seat with the echo of her own words ringing in her ears. How grand and grown-up it sounded to be going into Eastwich to fetch somebody home! She



could not help glancing at her travelling companions—an elderly farmer's wife, with a portly figure and a profusion of jet ornaments, and a flashy young woman who might be her daughter—to see whether they were duly impressed. But they seemed so much more interested in one another than in Emmeline, that a dreary sense of insignificance stole over her, and she began to find it harder and harder to think of herself as an important elder sister, instead of a lonely little girl doing what most people would consider a very naughty thing.

Half an hour's journey in the train brought her to Eastwich Station, where she alighted, feeling strange and bewildered, and not quite sure what to do next. A harassed porter jostled her with an impatient '*If you please!*' An agitated old lady, whose luggage appeared to have somehow misbehaved, begged her to '*get out of my way, little girl.*' Emmeline remembered the last time she had been on that platform, when she had been going to see Mary. For one moment she felt half inclined to go to Mary now, and pour out the story of all the troubles and mistakes and naughtinesses of the last two days to her old nurse. But then Mary would be so very much surprised and disappointed in Emmeline. No, she *could* not go there while Micky was still lost in Green Ginger Land. Perhaps they would go to Mary

when once she had brought him safe out of the clutches of that dreadful Mother Grimes. It would be so much easier to set things in a fair light then.

Well, she supposed the first thing to do would be to ask her way to Green Ginger Land. She made the inquiry of a chance porter. 'I'm sure I don't know, miss. Ask a policeman,' was his hurried and indifferent answer as he trundled away a great barrowful of trunks and boxes.

Policemen seemed scarce in Eastwich that day, and Emmeline had wandered some little way out of the station before she came across one.

'Green Ginger Land!' he repeated, looking at her oddly. 'That's not a fit place for a little lady like you to go all alone.'

'I know—I mean I can't help it,' said Emmeline. 'But oh, *do* tell me where it is!'

He gave her the direction, which **was** a difficult one, involving a formidable number of firsts to right and thirds to the left, and then repeated his warning. 'But it really aren't fit for the likes of you to go there alone by yourself. I'd go with you, only it's out of my beat.'

'Thank you; you are very kind,' and Emmeline hurried on for fear of further remonstrance.

Ten minutes' walking brought her into a part of Eastwich which was so strange to her and such a network of squalid streets that she soon grew

confused. No other policeman came in sight, and she began to feel worried as to what she should do. She had always been warned against speaking to strangers except those in uniform ; and yet she dared not go any further without asking her way, for fear of losing herself.

Great was her relief when she saw a lady coming towards her who looked as though she might be a clergyman's wife or a district visitor. Her appearance was so severely respectable that the rule of not speaking to strangers could not apply in this case ; so Emmeline went up to the lady and asked timidly the way to Green Ginger Land.

'Green Ginger Land?' said the stranger, eyeing her severely. 'You are surely not thinking of going there?'

'I—I was thinking of going there,' stammered Emmeline, confused and ashamed.

'Well, it's *most* unsuitable,' said the stranger. 'Green Ginger Land is not at *all* a nice street for a little girl like you to go to. Why, even policeman don't walk there alone after dark! Whatever makes you think of going there?'

Now, the sensible thing for Emmeline to have done would have been to tell the simple truth, and to say that she was going to look for her little brother, but somehow the severe stranger's manner, together with what she said about

Green Ginger Land being a dangerous place even for policemen, frightened her out of all presence of mind. At the moment Emmeline only felt in a confused way how very angry and shocked the lady would be if she guessed the truth, and it did not strike her until afterwards that in itself there was nothing in her little brother's being in Green Ginger Land which implied that it was her fault.

'I—I thought I'd like to,' she faltered, turning very red.

'Then you're a very silly little girl,' said the lady, even more severely than before. 'Green Ginger Land is a dreadful street, and you certainly mustn't *think* of going there'; and with that she went on her way.

For a moment Emmeline felt shaken in her purpose, but when the stranger's straight back had disappeared round the corner, she plucked up courage. It was dreadful to think of going to Green Ginger Land after what she had been told, but it was still more dreadful that Micky should be there partly through her fault; so Emmeline resolved to make another effort to find the way.

This time it was a ragged little girl whom she asked. 'Green Ginger Land? Just you turn by that there public-house at the corner. Then it's the second on the right and the first on the left,'

said the child glibly, as she gave Emmeline a cool stare of curiosity.

Five minutes more brought her to Green Ginger Land itself. It was certainly an unattractive place, but at first sight she was surprised not to find it more terrible. To be sure, it was dirtier and more smelly than any street to which Emmeline was used, and there were swarms of squalid children everywhere, and yet more squalid women who stood at their doors gossiping with arms akimbo ; but still, she could not see that there was anything of which a policeman or even a little girl need feel afraid.

Her relief did not last very long. The women left off gossiping with one another and turned to stare after her, making remarks which she could not quite catch, but the general tone of which sounded unpleasant. Some of the children ceased their play and began to follow her, calling out, ' My ! Aren't we a bloomin' swell ! ' and other sarcastic witticisms of the same order. Emmeline grew frightened again, and resolved to get her business over as quickly as might be.

' Can you tell me where a Mrs. Grimes lives ? ' she inquired timidly of a woman who looked a degree more respectable than most of the others.

The woman gave her a rude stare. ' I'm sure I can't say, my lady,' she answered, with a mincing imitation of Emmeline's tones which



produced a loud and disagreeable laugh. 'May I make so bold as to ask if you're a friend of hers?'

'No,' said Emmeline, flushing hotly, 'but I believe my little brother's at her house, and I want to fetch him home.'

'Oh, indeed! Well, I believe she resides somewhere down Paradise Court, just across the road there, but I can't say as to the number, and I wouldn't go there if I was you. Mrs. Grimes is a lady that don't always like company.' Again there was a roar of rude laughter from the people standing round.

Emmeline looked across the road to where the woman had pointed, and saw that what at a casual glance she had taken for a doorway was really an opening leading down steps into a long narrow court. Seen from where she stood, it did not look at all a nice place, but Emmeline screwed up her courage, and, crossing the road without another word, went cautiously down the dirty, broken steps into Paradise Court, still followed by her mob of jeering children.

If Green Ginger Land itself was smelly, Paradise Court in its dark narrowness was so foul that Emmeline might have covered her nose if she had not been too intent on avoiding the filthy, half-naked babies who were sprawling about everywhere to pay much heed to anything

else. What she did notice, however, was that evil-looking men and lads were appearing at several of the doors.

Suddenly a stone came whizzing through the air from behind, almost, though not quite, hitting her. A great shout of cruel laughter burst from the mob of children—laughter in which more than one hoarse man's voice joined.

'O, God, help me to be brave! Help me not to run away!' prayed Emmeline in desperate terror.

Another stone flew past her, and the shouts became louder. Hardly knowing what she did, she made blindly for a door, and thumped at it madly. After what seemed like an eternity, though it was really only a second or two, a woman's face was poked out.

'Oh, please,' said Emmeline, 'is this where Mrs. Grimes lives?'

'No, it ain't,' said the woman sharply, and before Emmeline could get out anything more she slammed the door in her face.

Emmeline felt as though she were living through some horrible nightmare. In front of her was the closed door; behind her the jeering crowd of children seemed to her terrified senses to be a howling, murderous mob.

Another cruel stone which only just missed made her cower with her head between her

hands. 'Oh, help me not to run away!' she prayed again.

'What's up? What are you doing of, you little varmint?' called out a rough, but not unkindly voice close to her. Looking up, she saw a stout young man of truculent aspect standing at her side. 'Just you leave this young lady alone, or I'll break every bone in your bodies!' he continued cheerfully.

Perhaps Emmeline's tormentors knew by experience that the young man's rough words were no mere figure of speech, for they slunk back, and one little boy who had just been to the road to pick up another stone thought better of it and dropped it on the pavement. 'I'm bothered if Bully Ben ain't turning a blooming saint!' called out a bold spirit; and there were other remarks of the same kind, which did not, however, seem in the least to disturb Bully Ben's serenity.

'What are you doing here?' he demanded of Emmeline. 'You'd have had a rough time of it, I can tell you, if I hadn't have come out.'

'I know,' said Emmeline, almost in tears—somehow it seemed harder not to break down now that the great danger appeared to be over—'it was so very, very good of you, and I do thank you! But oh, can you tell me where a Mother Grimes lives? I believe my little

brother's at her house, and I've come to look for him.'

'Mother Grimes?' said the youth, 'why, she's a pal of mine. But what have your little brother gone there for? Judging by you, he won't be the sort of lodger that's much in *her* line.'

'He ran away with a boy named Diamond Jubilee Jones, whom we'd—I mean, he'd come to stay with us for a day or two,' explained Emmeline, rather confusedly. 'I suppose you haven't happened to see him anywhere?'

'I seed him not an hour ago, and a little chap with him that must have been your brother,' said Bully Ben promptly. 'They told me they was off to the Fair, an' wouldn't be back till tea-time.'

'Oh, thank you!' cried Emmeline. 'I'll go there to find him, then.'

'I reckon I'll just see you safe out of these parts,' said Bully Ben graciously—an offer which she was only too thankful to accept, for those dreadful children were still lingering about, as though waiting to renew the attack as soon as Bully Ben's broad back should be turned.

Emmeline stole timid side-glances at her burly escort as they two left Paradise Court together, with a crowd of derisive children in the rear—at

a safe distance. He looked an extremely rough type of lad, and Emmeline had just decided that he was like one of those burglars in stories, whose hearts are always touched by innocent and helpless children, when he asked her the time.

The question, though rather unexpected, sounded harmless enough, so Emmeline pulled out her beloved little gold watch, and politely gave him the information he required.

‘That’s a rare fine watch,’ he remarked. ‘Let’s have a look at that.’

It was impossible to refuse her brave rescuer such a trifling request, so she put the watch into one of his very grimy hands.

‘Much obliged to you!’ he said, with a good-natured laugh. ‘So long!’ and before Emmeline, in her amazement, had realised what was happening, he had slipped back into Paradise Court.

For an instant she gazed blankly, scarcely believing her own senses. Then a roar of laughter from the onlookers maddened her into recklessness, and she was just going to rush down the steps again in pursuit of Bully Ben, when someone caught her firmly by the sleeve and held her back.

‘Don’t you never go in there again,’ whispered a girl’s voice in her ear. ‘Tisn’t safe. There was a preaching bloke got his head split open in there



only last Sunday. Just you run away before there's anything worse happens.'

The speaker was ragged and dirty, like everyone else in Green Ginger Land, and Emmeline was more than half-inclined to take her for an accomplice of Bully Ben's, and to disregard the warning. She hesitated, equally unable to make up her mind to resign her watch, or to screw up her courage to plunge back into that terrible court, and as she wavered the children began to gather close again.

'Just you run away,' said the girl more urgently than before.

It is hard to say what would have happened if Emmeline had not just then felt something sting her cheek. It was only a piece of banana-peel, but such a yell of triumph rose from the spectators that she was seized with panic and fled headlong, pursued by the howling mob of children.

On and on she ran, still seeming to hear the shouts of her pursuers, till she had got far outside the borders of Green Ginger Land. Still she ran blindly on, till at last she was brought to a sudden standstill by bumping so violently against a fat old lady as almost to knock her down.

'Well!' ejaculated the old lady, as soon as she had regained her breath, 'you *are* a rude little girl!'

'I'm—so—sorry,' panted Emmeline: 'some people—are chasing me—with stones.'

'There's nobody chasing you,' said the old lady severely, and when Emmeline looked round she saw that it was the truth. The Green Ginger children had all straggled back to their own land before this.

'It's just one of those rude games you children are always playing about the streets,' grumbled the old lady. 'I'm sure I don't know what girls are coming to.'

Poor Emmeline! She had never in her life before been suspected of playing rude games in the streets, but she had not the heart to defend herself, so she walked on without another word. As she walked, the thought of her lost watch—that dear little watch which had been her mother's very last gift—came back to her like a stab, and made her eyes fill with tears till everything became blurred, and she stumbled along not seeing where she was going.

But she was a plucky little soul at the bottom, not given to crying over spilt milk when there were more urgent things to be done, so, as her handkerchief had got lost in the course of her adventures, she wiped her eyes on the back of her glove.

'After all, it's only right you should have *some* punishment, for you oughtn't to have come into

Eastwich without leave,' she told herself, with something of that stern sense of justice with which she had been wont to govern the twins. 'And, anyhow, the thing that really matters is to find Micky, so what you've got to do now is to ask the way to the Fair.'

## CHAPTER XV

### MICKY AT THE FAIR

THE two policemen at Chudstone were feeling extremely puzzled.

It seemed so impossible that a boy of eight, supposed to have left home only that morning with little or no money, could have gone very far, and yet how was it, if he were anywhere in the neighbourhood, that nobody had yet succeeded in finding him?

There were no rivers within several miles of Woodsleigh, and even the horse-ponds were shallow, so that Micky could not well have been drowned; if he had been run over by a motor-car his mangled body would surely have been discovered before now; and as to the possibility of his having been stolen by gipsies, a raid upon the Baddicomb van had made it clear that that theory, at least, was without foundation. Under the circumstances it seemed extraordinary, not to say magical, that the boy had so utterly and absolutely disappeared.

Now, as a matter of fact, there was nothing

magical or even extraordinary in the business. Micky had simply gone to Eastwich, and he had travelled there not on a broom-stick, but part of the way on his own legs, and the other part hanging on to the back of a cart, which was taking some noisily aggrieved pigs for their last sad drive to the pork butcher's.

The real reason why nobody had managed to track him was twofold—firstly, he had had about twelve hours' more start than his friends fancied, having left home not on Wednesday morning, but at half-past seven on Tuesday evening; and secondly, people were on the look out for one little gentleman, whereas it should have been for two little tramps!

'Don't I make a splendid beggar?' Micky had demanded triumphantly, the evening before, when he had jumped out to join Diamond Jubilee, who was waiting just underneath his window—and the boast was no vain one. It is wonderful how a quick-witted boy can transform himself by dint of changing a neat sailor-suit for a ragged old coat and pair of knickers put away in the lumber-room, dispensing with collar, shoes, and stockings, and muddying his face and hands with flower-bed earth ('you have to lick it to make it stick,' Micky was careful to explain when he told the story afterwards); and all these things Micky had done, with the result that he looked every bit as



much of a little tramp as Diamond Jubilee himself.

‘It isn’t many men who’d have thought of waiting quietly in bed till the servants were safe out of the house,’ Micky had remarked complacently, as he and Diamond Jubilee were setting out, ‘and I don’t suppose most people would have known how to disguise themselves so well. It’s really a beautifully managed adventure.’

In Diamond Jubilee’s eyes the adventure had needed only one improvement.

‘I could do with a bit of something to eat afore we starts,’ he had suggested.

‘But Jane said I wasn’t to have my proper supper to-night, and of course we can’t take anything, for that would be stealing,’ said Micky, not in the least meaning to lecture, but simply to state a matter of fact.

‘You *are* a softy!’ said Diamond Jubilee, but he spoke in quite an affectionate tone and did not press the point further. It was strange how different he was when alone with Micky, from what he was when Emmeline was trying to improve him.

‘What have you done with your monkey-nuts?’ Micky had asked.

‘Oh, I just throwed ’em away. I were that sick of ’em, an’ they’d have been an awful fag to carry.’

‘You *are* a slacker, Diamond Jubilee!’ said Micky. ‘Why, just look at me, carrying a whole suit besides my shoes and stockings!’ It had occurred to Micky that he had better take his discarded sailor-suit and shoes and stockings with him, as they would be the handiest things to sell in case he found himself in need of money. It really was, as he said, a beautifully managed adventure!

None of the little Boltons had worn shoes or stockings for the first six years of their lives, so that Micky’s feet were too thoroughly hardened to mind stones or anything else, and the children did the first two miles of their journey at a good swinging pace, the more so, that there are plenty of sign-posts in that part of the country, so they did not have to stop and ask the way. During the third mile Diamond Jubilee began to flag badly, and Micky was secretly repenting the foresight which had given him such a troublesome bundle to carry; and at the beginning of the fourth mile both boys agreed that they must rest somewhere for the night before going on any farther.

They were just at that moment passing a farmhouse, one of the outbuildings of which proved on inspection to be a barn with some straw in it. What better sleeping-place could have been desired? The boys went in, nestled down amongst the straw, and dozed off as soundly as a couple of

little tops. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the lowing of the cows woke them up next morning before anyone had come in to find them, and they stole out again, feeling wonderfully refreshed and quite ready for the remaining nine miles of their walk. They had already gone one of those miles before Micky suddenly remembered that he had left the bundle of his suit and shoes and stockings behind in the barn. It did not seem worth while to go back and fetch them, however, especially as they were such a bother to carry.

It could not have been more than about five o'clock when the boys set out again, but they made most of the remainder of their journey in so leisurely a fashion that it was past three in the afternoon before they were well into East-wich, and they would have been later still had it not been for the secret lift which they obtained by hanging on to the pigs' cart for the last two miles of the way. What they had been doing all the time it would have been hard to say ; they had begged their breakfast at one farm and their lunch at another—neither meal was more than a drink of water and a hunch of bread each, but the bread tasted delicious, eaten under the hedge, after that long, hungry walk ; they had played about ; Micky had had such a successful fight with a little boy who had called after them, that Diamond Jubilee held out hopes that he might eventually develop

into the same kind of person as a certain friend of his, who had, he said, 'been in quod fifteen times for fighting, and would knock a chap down sooner than look at him'; and they had passed the time of day with most of the animals they met; but still, even allowing for all this, it must be owned that their progress was decidedly slow.

'I reckon,' remarked Diamond Jubilee, when at last they did find themselves strolling through the streets of Eastwich—it was at just about same time that Emmeline was making her way to Green Ginger Land—'I reckon we'd better get some money afore we go to Mother Grimes'. She aren't pleased if you come in without money, or wipes, or such, and sometimes she beat you something awful.'

Micky had not the slightest idea what 'wipes' might be, but he was not going to give himself away by asking.

'Does she ever go on beating you till you bleed?' he inquired with interest. He had never been beaten in his life, and was not in the least dismayed at the prospect, as a more experienced little boy might have been. On the contrary, he regarded it as adding just that touch of danger without which no adventure is complete.

'I've bled whole basins' full before now!' boasted Diamond Jubilee. 'It aren't much of a treat, I can tell you, when once Mother Grimes

starts a good old set-to, so I reckon we'll go to the Fair for a bit and do coach-wheels for the folks to throw us money before we go home.'

This plan exactly suited Micky, and to the Fair they accordingly went.

So it came about that Micky presently found himself once more in the midst of all that delightful noise and bustle which made up Eastwich Fair. He would turn his very best coach-wheels, he decided, and earn quantities of pennies for motor-rides and ice-cream (last time Emmeline wouldn't let them have any because people had to lick it out of glasses, as there were no spoons) and cocoanut-shies, and visits to the elephants. *He* wasn't going to give all his money to that old Mother Grimes, whatever Diamond Jubilee might do.

To all appearance that young gentleman was in no great hurry to do anything, for he would keep loitering about in an idle way long after Micky had begun turning coach-wheels. Micky told him he was a slacker, but it made no difference.

Quite a little crowd gathered to watch Micky.

'Don't the little chap do it well?' 'Just look at the poor lamb's bare feet?' 'He'd be a real pretty child if his face weren't so dirty.' 'Don't he thank you pretty?'

Those were some of the remarks people made



as they threw down their halfpence, and for each coin Micky said, 'Thank you very much, ma'am!' or 'Thank you very much, sir!' with the utmost politeness, whichever way up he happened to be.

He had earned a small harvest of halfpence, and the little exhibition was still going on as merrily as a marriage-bell, when the dreadful thing happened.

'Yes, I've been keeping my eye on you two young rascals. I know your little game!' said a stern, startling voice.

Micky spun himself right way up in double-quick time, and what was his surprise and horror to see Diamond Jubilee struggling in the grip of a tall policeman!

'Please, sir, I'd only just picked it up to give it back to the lady,' Diamond Jubilee was whimpering. 'She'd dropped it on the ground, please sir.'

'There's no use telling any lies about it,' said the policeman, 'for I saw you take the handkerchief out of the lady's pocket with my own eyes. You'll just come along of me—and you too,' he added, suddenly using his free hand to seize hold of the astonished Micky.

'It's all a mistake,' gasped Micky. 'On my word and honour as a gentleman we weren't doing anything—I mean we were only turning coach-wheels—at least——'

‘Yes, I saw you turning coach-wheels to take off attention from what your friend was doing,’ was the gruff answer. ‘I know the dodge. It’s just the way you little thieves always work.’

Micky’s face turned very white under its dirt.

‘We’re not thieves!’ he began hotly, but suddenly broke off. He could not say truthfully that Diamond Jubilee was not a thief, and it would be sneakish to stand up for himself at Diamond Jubilee’s expense. So Micky pressed his lips tightly together, and tried hard to keep them from quivering. He was not going to cry like a baby before all these people.

‘I shall have to take down your name and address, ma’am,’ said the policeman to a frightened-looking lady who was standing near, and whom Micky now noticed for the first time, ‘for you’ll be wanted to prosecute these boys.’

‘Oh, I don’t want to be hard on such children, especially as I’ve got the handkerchief back,’ she answered nervously.

‘It will be the best possible thing for them,’ he answered in a low voice; ‘they belong to a regular thieves’ school, and we’ve been watching long enough for an opportunity of breaking it up. Will you kindly hold the boys while I write the address?’ he added aloud to a stout young man.

The stout young man came forward willingly enough and took hold of an arm of each boy with

a firm grip from which Diamond Jubilee tried vainly to wriggle away. As for Micky, he stood as still as a little statue, and held his head high.

It only took a moment for the policeman to write down the address in a notebook which he whipped out of his pocket; and then with a peremptory 'Make way there, please!' to the bystanders, he took the two boys from the young man who was holding them and began marching them out of the Fair ground, followed by a large crowd.

Neither child made any attempt now to struggle away, but Micky's childish face had a look of set misery which went to the hearts of all the mothers who saw it, and presently struck even Diamond Jubilee.

Now Diamond Jubilee, though a very naughty boy, was not altogether a hardened one, and that expression on Micky's face made him feel distinctly uncomfortable. Micky had been a great softy not to stand up for himself—Diamond Jubilee, or any other sensible kid, would have jolly soon thrown the blame on the other chap if there had been the least chance of being believed—but some folks were born softies, and couldn't help it. Anyhow, Diamond Jubilee liked Micky, and couldn't abide his looking like that.

'Please, sir, the other boy didn't have nothing to do with it; he were only doing coach-wheels so

as folks should throw him halfpennies,' broke out Diamond Jubilee all of a sudden.

'Do you mean to say he didn't know what you were up to?' asked the policeman in an incredulous voice.

That question spoilt it. To own that he himself had been up to anything was more than could be expected of Diamond Jubilee's generosity. 'I weren't up to nothing,' he whined; 'I'm sure I never took the wipe. All I done were to pick it up to give the lady.'

'Now, there's no use in going back to that silly lie,' said the policeman sharply, 'for I saw you pull it out myself.' For an instant his belief in Micky's being an accomplice had been somewhat shaken—though the boy would surely have joined in defending himself if his conscience had been clear—but this last untruth made him set Diamond Jubilee down as an inveterate little liar whose testimony was worth nothing at all. When the child began to repeat the assertion that the other boy anyhow had had nothing to do with it, he was silenced at once with a stern 'I can't believe anything you say.'

As to Micky, he said not a word, partly out of a sense of chivalry towards Diamond Jubilee—if it would have been sneakish before to leave him to bear all the blame, it would be far worse now that he had been so decent—and partly because he

was too proud to stand up for himself when he was sure to be disbelieved.

As the two boys and the policeman walked along more and more people kept rushing out from side streets to see what was happening, until it seemed to poor Micky that all Eastwich must be there to witness his disgrace. Well, as soon as ever he was free again, he should flee the country, he resolved fiercely. It would be unbearable to live any longer in a land where such thousands of people—Micky felt sure there must be thousands at least—where such thousands of people came to stare at you being taken to prison.

Before they had gone far, the policeman stopped at the door of a tall grim building with many windows, some of which had bars. Into this grim building he took the boys.

\* \* \* \*

The crowd of gazers was just beginning to scatter, when a white-faced little girl, whose eyes were wide open with terror and dismay, came running up breathlessly from the opposite direction from the one in which the Fair lay. She looked about her distractedly as if she were hoping against hope to see somebody, and then leaned heavily against the wall of the tall grim building as though trying to steady herself.

‘Well, it’s a lesson what happens to bad boys,’



a voice was saying—to the white-faced little girl it seemed to come from somewhere a long, long way off—‘How would you like to go to prison, Jemmy?’

Prison! Oh, then the awful, unbelievable thing *had* happened! That tall grim house was a prison. It was to prison that she had seen the policeman taking Micky and Diamond Jubilee. ‘Those two little boys who’ve just gone in—in there,’ Emmeline (for she it was) heard herself saying jerkily to the voice which sounded so far away—‘what had they been doing?’

The owner of the voice, a careworn lad who was standing with his little brother almost at her elbow, turned round and stared at Emmeline’s pale, scared face. ‘They were caught at the Fair picking pockets,’ he told her bluntly. It did not occur to him that there was any need to speak with caution of two little street-urchins who could have no possible connection with this well-dressed child.

\* \* \* \* \*

Emmeline found herself running madly through the streets of Eastwich in the direction of Mary’s house; running as she might have run if Micky had been drowning, or she had been bound on some other errand of life or death. What she expected Mary to be able to do she could not have told—even grown-ups could not rescue

people from prison—but the blind instinct of going to her old friend for help in this terrible trouble made her rush on, panting and sobbing, heedless of the many people against whom she knocked and who turned to stare after her in indignant or pitying surprise. She began crossing a road without noticing a tradesman's cart which was galloping out of a side street; neither did she hear the driver's horrified shout of 'Hi!' as he tried vainly to pull up his horse in time. All she was conscious of was of suddenly being thrown to the ground, and then of a blow on her head and a frightful pain in her arm. Afterwards everything became dark, and she knew no more.

## CHAPTER XV.

### EMMELINE TALKS THINGS OVER

EMMELINE opened her eyes again to find herself half sitting, half lying across the seat of a cab. A strange lady with a grave, kind face was kneeling by her side, holding her arm.

‘Where—’ began Emmeline faintly, breaking off with a groan as the cab gave a jolt and she felt a sudden shoot of pain rather like having a tooth out, only it was much worse, and in her arm, not her mouth.

‘We are going to the Infirmary,’ said the lady gently; ‘they’ll soon make you well.’

‘Can’t we go to Mary?’ said Emmeline, so feebly that the lady could not quite catch the words.

‘You shall go home as soon as ever the doctor has put your arm right,’ she promised.

After that the pain grew so bad that there was nothing for it but just to lie back on the seat and squeeze her lips tightly together so as to keep from screaming. At that moment she did not care where she was going if only she got there

soon, and this dreadful jolting drive came to an end.

After a few minutes that seemed almost like as many hours the cab stopped, and then somebody came and lifted her out with strong, careful arms. She must have fainted again after that, for the next thing she knew was that she was lying on a bed in a strange room, and that a doctor was leaning over her, hurting her horribly by feeling her arm.

‘Only a simple fracture,’ he remarked cheerfully. ‘We shall soon set that to rights.’

It was all very well for the doctor to speak cheerfully, but the process of having her arm set gave Emmeline the sharpest pain she had ever known. One agonised ‘Oh!’ did burst from her, but except for that she lay quite still and quiet, only breathing harder than usual.

‘Well, you’re one of the pluckiest little things I’ve ever had to do with,’ said the doctor warmly, when he had finished his work.

‘Yes, indeed she is,’ agreed the Nurse who had helped to bind up the arm.

Emmeline gave a wan little smile. ‘One must be—game,’ she remarked. ‘Game’ was one of Micky’s words which she would never have used if she had been quite herself.

‘Well, you have been very game!’ said the doctor smiling as he left her.

Afterwards the Nurse began to undress her. Emmeline had a dreamy impression that the proceeding was a strange one, and that there was something very important she ought to have been doing, but she could not remember what it was, and she felt so tired and so much disinclined to argue that she just submitted without a word.

‘Now, dear, can you tell me your name and where you live?’ asked the Nurse, as she put Emmeline into the narrow spring-bed on which she had lain to have her arm set.

‘My name’s Emmeline Bolton,’ was the prompt answer, ‘and I live——’ She hesitated, frowned with perplexity, and then broke into a weak little laugh. ‘Why, how funny! I can’t remember the name of the place.’

‘Don’t you live in Eastwich, then?’ asked the Nurse.

‘No, I don’t think we live there now,’ said Emmeline in a puzzled way. ‘Mary does, though,’ she added as an afterthought.

‘Do you remember Mary’s address and what her surname is?’

Emmeline frowned again.

‘It’s very odd,’ she said after a moment. ‘I don’t seem able to remember anything to-day.’

‘Never mind,’ said the Nurse, ‘it’ll all come back to you soon enough.’ She went out of the



room and returned presently with a glass of warm milk. 'Drink this,' she said, 'and then go to sleep like a good child.'

Emmeline drained the glass obediently, after which she dropped her head back on to the pillow, and in another minute she had fallen sound asleep.

'Poor little thing!' said the Nurse to herself as she went away. 'She's still dazed with the blow on her head. Well, it can't have been a very bad one, or she wouldn't have remembered as much as she did, so I dare say she'll be pretty well all right by to-morrow. For to-night all we can do is to give notice at the police-station that she is here.'

Emmeline awoke the next morning to find the sunlight pouring full into the room where she was lying—a strange room with three empty beds in it instead of Kitty's, and none of the familiar pictures nor furniture. Her first feeling was one of bewilderment as to where she was, and why one of her arms felt so funny. Then she remembered that this was Eastwich Infirmary, and that she had been brought there in a cab to have her arm put to rights.

What had she been doing in Eastwich? For a moment she could not think. Then suddenly all the events of the last few days flashed back upon her, up to the time when she had been

standing talking to the stranger boy outside the tall grim house, into which the policeman had just led Micky and Diamond Jubilee!

When the Nurse came in to attend to her a few minutes later, there was nothing to be seen of Emmeline but a restless lump, heaving about stormily underneath the bed-clothes.

'It's very bad for the child to lie with her head covered up like that,' thought the Nurse, and, going up to the bed, she tried gently to pull down the clothes. For a moment Emmeline held on fiercely, and when she did let her face be uncovered it was tear-stained and flushed.

'Well, how are you feeling this morning?' asked the Nurse kindly, ignoring the marks of tears. She was quite used to patients being miserably shy and homesick just at first.

'Better, thank you—I mean quite well,' said Emmeline. 'Please, I can't stay here,' she went on. 'There's something dreadfully important I must tell my friends. I can't think how I came to forget it last night. I must dress and go to them now, at once. You don't know how frightfully it matters!'

'Don't be so unhappy,' said Nurse. 'We'll send for your friend, and I daresay she'll be here almost as soon as you've finished your breakfast.'

'Oh, thank you!' said Emmeline, as much relieved as she could be just then. 'It's Miss

Mary Bell I want to see, and her address is 14, East Parade.'

'I know,' said the Nurse. 'Her brother was round late last night inquiring after you. They had found out at the police-station where you were, and were very anxious about you, so mind you eat a good breakfast and look as well as possible when your friend comes, so as to set her mind at rest,' and Nurse went away with a merry smile which poor Emmeline felt quite incapable of returning.

Events turned out even better than Nurse's word. Emmeline was still struggling with her basin of arrowroot, when the sound of a voice in the passage outside made her flush and tremble all over. Then the door opened, and Nurse entered, followed by Mary, who hobbled in looking anxious and worried, but otherwise so much her motherly self that there would have been comfort in the very sight of her if Emmeline had been less taken up with the thought of the terrible news she must tell.

'Well, my poor darling, you have been through a lot!' said Mary, coming close to the bed and bending down to kiss Emmeline's quivering face.

The kindly tone was too much for Emmeline, and she burst into tears.

'You won't want to k-kiss me when you've

heard what dreadful things have happened all through m-me!' she sobbed.

'There, there, my darling. Don't take on so!' said Mary, kissing her again. 'Things aren't so bad as what you think. Master Micky have been found.'

'But, Mary,' she broke out desperately, 'he's in *prison*. I saw a policeman take him there yesterday afternoon.'

'Oh no, dear,' Mary hastened to explain, 'not to prison, only to the police-station. People can't be sent to prison till they have been tried in court, you know. Micky didn't stay long even at the police-station, for as soon as he gave his name and address they knew he must be the boy who was missing, and sent for me to take him away.'

'And is that really all that will happen,' cried Emmeline.

'Well, he's had to go to the police-court this morning to be questioned by the magistrate,' Mary was forced to admit. 'But I quite hope he will get on all right. Nobody could talk to him without seeing what an honest little boy he is really, and that he didn't a bit understand what that Diamond Jubilee was up to. That Diamond Jubilee is a real bad boy, if ever there was one!'

'I'm afraid he is,' said Emmeline sorrowfully. 'It's a dreadful pity Micky ever got mixed up with him. And oh, Mary, it's all my fault that he

ever did! That's what I was going to tell you about.'

'I think Master Micky has told me,' said Mary. 'You mean about adopting that boy unbeknown to Miss Bolton. I must say I was surprised to hear it of *you*, Miss Emmeline. I should never have thought you would have done anything so silly—to say nothing of its being very naughty to do such a thing without leave.'

'You see,' faltered Emmeline, 'I knew Aunt Grace wouldn't understand or sympathise with us trying to do a good work.'

'And I don't blame her either,' said Mary. 'Not good works of that kind. They're not suitable to children.'

Poor Emmeline felt as though her one friend had gone over to the enemy. Mary's remark was almost exactly what Aunt Grace had said last Sunday, when Emmeline had been so indignant with her for not appreciating that charitable little Kathleen.

'But, Mary,' she said piteously. 'You *did* say yourself that guileless children could do more good to sinners than anybody else, and I'm sure Diamond Jubilee is a sinner!'

Mary looked as much taken aback as people usually do when their own theories are put by others into inconvenient practice.

'I wasn't thinking of adoption when I said



that,' she explained rather lamely. 'Specially not a nasty, dirty little boy like that, who isn't at all fit company for little ladies and gentlemen. But there, my darling, I don't want to scold you, for I'm sure you meant well, and anyhow, you've been punished more than enough already, both for adopting the boy, and also for running away to find Micky, which is another thing you would never have done if you had stopped to think how dreadfully anxious and unhappy it would make everybody.'

'Did it?' and Emmeline looked self-reproachful; 'but there wasn't anyone at home who would mind much. It isn't as if Jane and Cook cared for us as you do, Mary.'

'It isn't likely they should, but for all that they were nearly frightened out of their wits, poor things,' said Mary, 'specially after Miss Miller had got out of Kitty that you'd gone to Green Ginger Land to look for Master Micky.'

'How do you know all this?' asked Emmeline.

'I had a letter from Jane this morning, and a telegram from Miss Miller yesterday evening,' answered Mary.

There was a moment's silence.

'Yes, I see now that I oughtn't to have gone off like that,' said Emmeline sadly. 'But I was so dreadfully unhappy about Micky that nothing seemed to matter except finding him.'

Mary was too kind to point out to Emmeline that Mick would have been found just as soon if she had never made her expedition.

‘Yes, poor darling, I can just fancy what you must have been feeling!’ she said, ‘George would have left a message for you last night about Master Micky, only while he’s in this trouble it seems best not to make any more talk than can be helped, so I thought I’d come round and tell you first thing this morning instead, and see how you were at the same time. How did you come to get run over?’

‘I can’t remember anything about it, it seems just wiped out of my mind,’ said Emmeline; ‘it’s very funny, for I remember the early part of the afternoon so well. Oh, Mary, it was just like a dreadful dream!’

Then she went on to tell of her adventures in Green Ginger Land.

Mary shuddered as she listened, for she knew far better than Emmeline herself what a risk the child had run.

‘Thank God nothing worse happened than your watch being stolen!’ she exclaimed from the bottom of her heart when she had heard the whole story. ‘That’s very grieving, though. But maybe the police will be able to get it back for you.’

‘Do you really think the police will get me back my watch?’ cried Emmeline.

‘Well, you mustn’t reckon on it, but I can’t help hoping they may,’ said Mary. ‘And now, my darling, I must be going, for Master Micky’s case will be getting over, and I must go and hear how the poor lamb got on.’

‘You’ll come back and tell me as soon as ever you know anything, won’t you?’ pleaded Emmeline.

‘I expect your aunt will want to come herself, dear, but if she doesn’t, I certainly will,’ answered Mary.

‘Aunt Grace!’ exclaimed Emmeline. ‘Why, she isn’t here. She’s in London!’

‘She’s here now,’ said Mary. ‘Miss Miller telegraphed for her yesterday evening, and when she reached home, about two o’clock this morning, she found a telegram from George to say that both you and Micky were at Eastwich, and that you had had an accident. So she came back here by the seven o’clock train.’

‘How dreadfully tired she must be!’ exclaimed Emmeline. ‘And how could she leave her friend?’

‘The poor lady died yesterday afternoon,’ said Mary in a low voice. ‘The end came much more suddenly than anyone expected.’

‘Oh, Mary, I wish it hadn’t all happened just yesterday!’ said Emmeline, with tears in her eyes.

‘So do I, dear,’ said Mary. ‘But it’s no use crying over spilt milk. The only thing for you

to do now is to tell your Aunt Grace how very sorry you are. You'll find she'll understand.'

Emmeline heaved herself round and buried her face in the pillow.

'No, she won't,' she muttered. 'Nobody could, and besides, she never really cared for me. She'll hate me after this, I expect.'

'Miss Emmeline, you musn't talk of your aunt like that,' said Mary gently. 'She loves you all dearly—I never knew how dearly till I saw her this morning, tired to death with the journey and all the worry and anxiety following so quick on her grief at losing her friend, and yet comforting poor little Micky as if she'd been his mother. Now that it is all over, and I shall never misjudge her so again, perhaps there's no harm in telling you that there was a time when I had my doubts as to how your living with her would turn out, what with her being so young and pretty, and more used to a gay London life than to bringing up children; but I've reproached myself many a time this morning for ever having had such uncharitable thoughts, for a better Christian or a more loving-hearted young lady doesn't walk the earth.'

Poor dear Mary! She little thought that Emmeline had all along been quite aware of those misgivings of hers, which she had been too loyal and good a woman ever to express in words, or

that it is far easier to suggest doubts than to put trust and confidence in their place. Emmeline said nothing, but she none the less looked forward with dread to the possible visit from Aunt Grace. Even Mary thought she had done very wrong, dear kind Mary, who always took the best view of things, and as to Aunt Grace, she would never really forgive her, or believe how very sorry she was.

Emmeline's heart sank when, about half an hour afterwards, Aunt Grace herself arrived. She was looking so ill and sad that a dreadful fear came over Emmeline lest Micky might, after all, have been sent to prison, and she could only look at Aunt Grace in dumb suspense. Fortunately, her aunt understood at once, and hastened to set her mind at rest.

'It's all right, Emmeline,' she said ; 'Micky has come out of the affair all right, and is quite cleared of the charge of helping the other boy to thief. Micky stood up before the magistrate like a little hero, and answered every question so frankly and pluckily that no one could doubt that he was telling the truth. Then it came to the other boy's turn, and though he whimpered, and altogether did not cut nearly such a good figure as Micky, he was quite ready to own that Micky had known nothing of his meaning to pick the lady's pocket. I dare say poor Diamond Jubilee



is a very naughty little boy, but I shall always have a kindly feeling towards him, for being so anxious as he certainly was to clear Micky's character. The end of it all was that Micky was acquitted. I'm not altogether sorry he had the fright, as a punishment for his naughtiness in running away. As to the other poor child, he was sentenced to have six strokes of the birch.'

'Then even *he* won't be sent to prison?' asked Emmeline.

'Oh no, they would never think of sending such a child to prison,' Aunt Grace assured her. 'You poor little Emmeline, I don't wonder you looked so white and frightened just now, if you were expecting to hear of Micky's being sent to prison! But now your mind is easy about him, I want you to tell me what's been happening to *you*, my poor child.'

Something in the unexpected gentleness of the question brought the tears into Emmeline's eyes again. 'Oh, Aunt Grace,' she said, 'I am so very, very sorry!'

Aunt Grace bent over her suddenly, and gave her one of her rare kisses. 'I know you are, darling,' she said—she had never called Emmeline 'darling' before—'tell me all about it. Of course I know a good deal from what Micky has told me, but I want to hear it from you too. Tell me

from the very beginning. What made you first think of adopting Diamond Jubilee?’

It was very odd; all the morning Emmeline had been dreading more than anything else having to tell her story to Aunt Grace, and yet, now, almost before she knew what she was doing, she found herself pouring it all out as freely and fully as if Aunt Grace had been her most intimate friend. She began by speaking of the Meeting in the Village School, and of how much it had made her want to do good to the poor. Then came the history of the day they had gone to the Fair alone—‘and I knew all the time you wouldn’t like us to go alone, though I pretended to myself that you wouldn’t mind,’ Emmeline confessed—and of the encounter with Diamond Jubilee, and of how it had almost seemed ‘meant’ that they should adopt him when his dire need of being plucked as a brand from the burning was brought home to them so forcibly.

‘I thought how b-beautiful it would be to bring him up to be a m-missionary!’ said Emmeline, with two little sobs at the remembrance of the woeful way in which Diamond Jubilee had disappointed her.

‘I shouldn’t have thought myself he was quite cut out for a missionary,’ said Aunt Grace gravely, though her eyes could not help twinkling a little, ‘but go on.’

Emmeline went on to tell of all the plans for Diamond Jubilee's welfare, of the Feudal Castle where he was to dwell, and the chocolate and monkey-nuts on which he was to live, and of all their plots and contrivances. Once or twice she noticed that her listener looked away quickly, but she did not pay much attention to this, and was continuing her tale quite gravely and sorrowfully, when all at once Aunt Grace broke into one of those clear, ringing laughs which Emmeline had been wont to consider so frivolous and unsuitable for an aunt. For a moment Emmeline stared at her, puzzled and half offended; then suddenly it struck her for the first time that the whole affair really was rather funny, and she too laughed, though a little doubtfully.

'I'm so sorry, Emmeline,' said Aunt Grace; 'I didn't mean to laugh, but you raised such an absurd picture in my mind that I simply couldn't help it!'

'I don't mind at all,' said Emmeline, and it was the truth, though a week ago she would have been greatly displeased at anyone's venturing to be amused at her.

'Well, go on with your story,' said Aunt Grace, and Emmeline began to relate the troubles and adventures of yesterday. Aunt Grace listened so sympathetically that it must be owned that her niece quite enjoyed giving a graphic description

of the past perils of Green Ginger Land and of her horror at seeing Micky in the hands of the policeman. It was only when she had come to the end of her tale and Aunt Grace remained silent that she remembered it had really been in the nature of a confession.

'Are you going to scold me, Aunt Grace?' she asked at the end, a little uneasily.

There was a moment's pause before Aunt Grace answered: 'No, I don't think I will scold you. Of course, it was very wrong to adopt the child without leave, but I think what has happened has taught you just how wrong and foolish it was better than anything I could say. And in itself it was a good and beautiful thing to want to help poor little Diamond Jubilee to a better life.'

Again there was a silence. Then Emmeline said timidly: 'Do you know, Aunt Grace, I always thought you didn't care about such things.'

'What made you think I didn't?' asked Aunt Grace, who did not seem at all offended.

'Because—because'—Emmeline stammered and turned rather red, 'you seemed almost to dislike that wonderful little girl Mr. Faulkner told us about—I mean the one who was so very good to the poor children.'

'I'm sure she was a little prig,' said Aunt Grace, quickly, 'and, anyhow, she wasn't worthy of all the fuss Mr. Faulkner was making about her. But it

doesn't follow, because I don't think very much of that particular little girl, that I don't like other little girls trying to do unselfish things, even if they make mistakes sometimes, for I do'; and once more she bent down and kissed Emmeline. A sudden recollection stung Emmeline.

'You wouldn't think nearly so well of me if you knew everything,' she blurted out; 'there's something ever so much worse I was forgetting to tell you. We had spent all our money that day we went to the Fair, and—and I thought we might use the extra money-box money to buy Diamond Jubilee's food with. You see we *had* collected it for children like him.' She broke off, not knowing how to tell the rest.

'You had collected it on the understanding that it was for the Home, not to buy chocolates and monkey-nuts for any ragged little boy you chanced to come across,' said Aunt Grace gently, 'so I'm afraid you'll have to pay it back gradually out of your pocket-money. By the way, did you buy your railway ticket out of the extra money-box fund?'

'Oh no, I borrowed that from the chickens' money, and I did mean to pay it back next Saturday. But that isn't all I was going to tell you'—she turned away her head—'I as good as told a story about the extra money-box money afterwards'—her voice grew choky—'Jane found



out it was empty, like the prying old thing she is, and said she was sure Alice had taken the money, as she had been doing my room.'

'And you didn't tell her you'd taken it yourself?' said Aunt Grace quietly, as Emmeline hid her face in the pillow.

A stifled sound that could just be distinguished as 'No!' came from the depths of the pillow.

'Well, I'm very sorry indeed about this,' said Aunt Grace, 'far more sorry than about anything else that's happened. But I'm glad you've told me. You'll have to tell Jane as soon as you get home.'

Emmeline hated the idea of telling Jane, but she saw that it was the only honourable thing to be done, and resolved to do it on the first possible opportunity; a resolution which she bravely carried out when the right time came.

That was all Aunt Grace said in the way of reproof. For the rest of the visit she spoke chiefly of Miss King, telling Emmeline about the last few hours of her life as though she found comfort in the child's sympathy.

'I can't grieve very much,' she said simply. 'For years we had been dreading the end, and when it really came she suffered so very little. Of course, there must always be one's selfish sorrow at the loss, but I can't feel she is at all far off.'

A few minutes later Aunt Grace went away, and for the rest of the morning Emmeline was left alone except for a short visit from the Doctor. She did not feel at all dull or lonely, however, for there seemed so much to think and wonder over.

‘It’s very odd how different people are from what you expect them to be,’ was the upshot of her reflections. ‘Mary was dear and kind, as she always is, but she didn’t understand a bit. It was Aunt Grace who understood that adopting Diamond Jubilee wasn’t *all* naughtiness. Well, that plan’s been a great failure, and I don’t suppose we shall ever see him again, but anyhow, there’s one good thing come of it. If it hadn’t been for Diamond Jubilee I might never have known how good and nice Aunt Grace really is!’

## CHAPTER XVII

### DIAMOND JUBILEE IS ADOPTED FOR THE SECOND TIME

EMMELINE's expectation that they would never see Diamond Jubilee again was not fulfilled. They saw him again only a week later.

During the interval, various things had been happening in Paradise Court. The police had long been on the look-out for a pretext to make a raid on Mother Grimes's premises, and the theft of Emmeline's watch gave them just the excuse they wanted, for Bully Ben lived at the informal little school kept by that lady, of whom he was an old pupil. When the raid took place, they discovered not only the watch, but so many other stolen properties that Mother Grimes herself, Bully Ben and several more of the older pupils presently found themselves being lodged at His Majesty's expense for longer or shorter terms. Emmeline's watch was not directly responsible for this, for the prisoners had been tried on other charges of which there were plenty ; so that she had all the delight of its being restored to her

without the disagreeable experience of appearing in the witness-box.

Bad though it was, Mother Grimes's establishment had been Diamond Jubilee's only home, and his probable fate now that it had been broken up weighed much on Aunt Grace's mind, for something in the appearance of the forlorn little street arab as he stood up to bear witness to Micky's innocence had touched her kind heart. She said nothing as yet on the subject to any of his former adopters, but simply arranged for his coming to make a fortnight's stay with a respectable old woman in the village, who was glad to eke out her slender earnings by receiving little town children in need of a country holiday.

Diamond Jubilee arrived ; a much pleasanter Diamond Jubilee than he had been on his first introduction to the children, for Aunt Grace had provided for his going through a series of carbolic acid baths, and had furnished him with a sufficient stock of Micky's old clothes to allow of his former wardrobe being burnt. It is much easier for a boy to have self-respect when his outward appearance is neat, and Diamond Jubilee's language and manners improved very decidedly. Of course, there were occasional outbreaks when the ways of respectability bored him, and less occasional lapses into the speech of Green Ginger Land, but on the whole he was so docile

and well-behaved that Aunt Grace became more unwilling than ever to let him go back to the workhouse, far less to the old Paradise Court life.

He came to play or to go for walks with the Bolton children most afternoons, and on these occasions Aunt Grace always took care to be present, much to his delight, for he had developed a chivalrous devotion to her.

‘She’s a rare clever gal,’ he told Micky.

Perhaps Micky was more gratified by the compliment than Aunt Grace felt in her turn when Diamond Jubilee confided to her that Micky would have been ‘a master one’ at Mother Grimes’s trade, if only he had been brought up to it—he was that quick and sharp!

All this time a certain plan was ripening in Aunt Grace’s mind, and at last one tea-time she mooted it to the children.

‘How would you like to adopt Diamond Jubilee again?’ she suggested cheerfully.

‘Scrumptious!’ said Micky, with his mouth full of bread and jam. ‘He’ll be champion at bowling when I’ve trained him a little more.’

‘And Punch is getting quite fond of him. He came and licked all over his face yesterday,’ put Kitty.

Emmeline looked doubtful. It was all very well having Diamond Jubilee for a fortnight’s visit, but adopting him again was another matter.



‘I’m afraid, Micky, it would hardly do to keep him here, even to play cricket with you,’ said Aunt Grace. ‘You see, he needs to be kept under strict discipline. No, my idea is for you children to send him to Mr. Faulkner’s Home. They’d take him for fifteen pounds a year, and it would be the making of him.’

‘Then shouldn’t we ever see him?’ said Kitty dolefully.

‘What a beastly dull sort of adoption!’ exclaimed Micky.

‘And where are the fifteen pounds to come from?’ said Emmeline, ‘even with birthday money and Christmas money put together we don’t get nearly fifteen pounds.’

‘Well,’ said Aunt Grace slowly, ‘you know I promised to get you a donkey and cart. If you were willing to do without them, I’d give you each five pounds a year instead, and you could pay for Diamond Jubilee’s keep at the Home. As to not seeing Diamond Jubilee, and its being a dull sort of adoption, he could always come and spend the summer holidays with us, you know, and you would get letters from him in between-whiles and hear a great deal about him from Mr. Faulkner. But, after all, whether it’s dull or interesting isn’t the question. The question is whether you are willing to deny yourselves a pleasure so as to give a poor little

boy who has never had a chance yet the opportunity of growing up into a good, useful man. I don't want to press you in any way, and I don't want you to settle anything in a hurry, but talk it over quietly among yourselves and tell me in a day or two what you think of the plan.'

For the rest of the day the children were rather silent and preoccupied. It was not nearly so much fun adopting Diamond Jubilee in the fashion Aunt Grace suggested as when his presence in the neighbourhood had involved the perils and delights of a plot; but they were good children in the main, and Aunt Grace's suggestions had a way of sticking.

Emmeline came up to the schoolroom that evening, when the twins were drinking their supper-milk, and began fidgeting with the blind-tassel. 'After all,' she remarked abruptly, 'I suppose when you've once adopted a person you're rather bound to go on with it if you can, even if it doesn't turn out quite as beautiful and romantic as you thought it would be.'

'And dogs are awfully good judges of character,' remarked Kitty thoughtfully. 'Everybody says so.'

'Well,' said Micky gloomily, 'I suppose it doesn't really much matter which sort of donkey we get!'

‘Emmeline,’ said Kitty, ‘you’ll wait to tell Aunt Grace when we’re there, won’t you?’

‘Let’s all go downstairs again and tell her now!’ said Micky, more cheerfully. Micky would have been reconciled to most things so long as they gave him a good excuse for going downstairs again after the doom of bedtime had been pronounced.

‘Well,’ remarked Mr. Faulkner, ‘things certainly run in families.’ He had come to call one afternoon, and found the whole party out except Emmeline, who was staying in with a cold. They had been discussing the re-adoption of Diamond Jubilee.

‘How do you mean?’ asked Emmeline.

‘I was thinking of your Aunt Grace,’ said Mr. Faulkner, between two puffs of his pipe, ‘and how *she* first took up practical philanthropy at the mature age of twelve.’

‘Did she?’ asked Emmeline, rather vaguely. Truth to tell, she did not feel quite certain what practical philanthropy meant.

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Faulkner. ‘Don’t you remember my speaking at the Meeting the other evening of that little girl whose pocket-money was the very first subscription to the Home, and who spent most of her playtime trying to help the poor little children of the slums? It was very stupid of me, but it never struck me till your aunt seemed so

shy of its being spoken of that it might be the same Miss Bolton.'

'But that child's name was Kathleen,' said Emmeline, looking very much puzzled.

'Yes, I know. It was really that which threw me out, for I didn't discover till the other day that Miss Bolton's second name is Kathleen, and that she was always called by it until she grew up.'

A light had broken on Emmeline's face. 'Why, to be sure!' she exclaimed, 'I remember now mother telling me that Kitty was named after her.'

A short silence followed, during which Mr. Faulkner puffed away at his pipe and dreamed rose-coloured day-dreams which might or might not come true, and Emmeline strove hard to grasp this startling new idea. 'I wonder when she gave up that sort of thing,' she remarked presently.

'What sort of thing?' asked Mr. Faulkner. He had been growing rather absent just lately.

'Looking after the poor, I mean, and—and all that.'

'Why, when she came to look after you instead,' said Mr. Faulkner, smiling.

'Then was it *that* she used to do when she lived in London?' asked Emmeline, on whom all sorts of wonderful new lights were suddenly dawning.

'To be sure,' said Mr. Faulkner. 'What did you think she was doing?'

'I thought she was going to dances and—dinner-parties,' stammered Emmeline.

'So she did sometimes,' said Mr. Faulkner, calmly; 'it was at a dinner-party that I first met her.'

The walkers came in a moment afterwards, and the twins pounced on Mr. Faulkner with acclamation. 'Mr. Faulkner, is it true that Diamond Jubilee's school reports will be sent to *us* just like people's reports are sent to their real parents?' demanded Micky.

'Yes, you'll be duly informed twice a year of the number of marks he gets for arithmetic and what we think of his temper,' Mr. Faulkner assured him.

Micky bounded into the air. 'I'm jolly glad we settled on having him instead of the donkey!' he announced.

'I do wish we were going to see him all the year round instead of only just at the summer holidays,' remarked Kitty. 'I'm sure Punch will miss him dreadfully. He always hates it when people go away.'

'Well, it's a great castle in the air of mine that some day things will work out so that you do see him all the year round,' said Mr. Faulkner, glancing at Aunt Grace, who had turned rather rosier than usual.

'But that would only be if we lived in the same



place as the Home and you,' said Kitty, 'and that's much too jolly ever to come true.'

'Is it?' said Mr. Faulkner smiling, and Aunt Grace smiled too, though what the joke was, the children could not imagine.

'Aunt Grace,' whispered Emmeline that evening as she hugged her aunt good-night with her uninjured arm, 'I've found out to-day that I'm the silliest goose that ever was, and I'm so awfully glad!'

'It seems rather an unusual subject for rejoicing!' observed Aunt Grace.

'Oh, I'm not rejoicing because I've been a goose,' Emmeline hastened to explain, 'but because I've just found out who that Kathleen Mr. Faulkner told us about really was.'

'That child was a little prig, Emmeline, as I've told you before,' said Aunt Grace smiling.

'Well, anyhow she grew up into the delightfulest aunt in the world!' was Emmeline's answer.





